EXTEMPORE PREACHING

BY

WILDER SMITH

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HARTFORD:
BROWN & GROSS.
1884.

PRESS OF
THE CASE, LOCKWOOD & BRAINARD CO.,
HARTFORD, CONN.

CONTENTS.

I. Relative Advantages.

II. Preparation, Special.

III. Preparation, General.

IV. Arrangement.

V. Illustrations.

VI. Style.

VII. Memory.

VIII. First Attempts.

IX. Delivery.

X. Physical Conditions.

XI. Spiritual Conditions.

XII. Repeating.

I.

RELATIVE ADVANTAGES.

The question, of the relative advantages of written or extempore discourses, is of great practical importance to every minister of the gospel. It does not, indeed, rank with matters touching faith and morals; but among the minor considerations affecting the ministerial career, there are few of greater consequence than this.

It is somewhat remarkable that the controversy between these two methods has lasted so long, and is not yet settled. It emerges in the very inception of our Protestant churches.

Hooker, in his *Ecclesiastical Polity*, speaks contemptuously of "Sermons without book; sermons which spend their life in their birth, and may have public audience but once;" while the non-conformists eagerly defended them.

The prejudice of the Scottish Kirk against the use of notes in the pulpit is well known. Still, so exacting are the demands upon the pulpit in Scotland for highly intellectual discourses, that the preachers feel compelled, for the most part, to write their sermons, and at much painful cost commit them to memory.

If we turn to this country, it appears that in New England, and among those of New England descent, there has been a strong feeling in favor of written sermons; while in the Presbyterian church south, and among the greater part of the Methodists and Baptists, the decided preference has been for an extemporaneous style. But of late the mutual toleration and drawing together of Christian denominations is apparent, not only in borrowing from each other church music and liturgic forms, but in the style of preaching as well. For written sermons are occasionally seen in Methodist pulpits, and extempore sermons are by no means uncommon, among all denominations, and before the most critical audiences of Boston, Philadelphia, or New York.

The Rev. Heman Humphrey, president of Amherst, in his letters to a son in the ministry, written in 1842, says, "I come now to a question which has of late occasioned a good deal of discussion, in some parts of the land, as to the comparative advantages and disadvantages of preaching, with or without notes. The General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian church, as you know, at their last meeting in Philadelphia, recommended the dispensing with the use of manuscript preparations altogether, and sent down the record to all the Synods and Presbyteries of their connection. What effect this advice has had upon the large and very respectable body of ministers, to whom it was addressed, I am not informed; I presume, however, that things re-

main very much as they were before." About twenty years later, an attempt was made to force a similar motion through the Scottish General Assembly, but failed.

Thus the discussion has continued long and is as far from settlement as ever. While the advocates of extempore sermons have enjoyed, perhaps, the best of the argument, the written sermons have retained a large proportion of the practice. There are, in the United States, a few eminent extemporaneous preachers; there are thousands of ministers, of highest abilities and largest usefulness, who read every word of their discourses, from fully-prepared manuscripts.

There is much to be said in favor of the latter method. The ancient treatises are almost unanimous in favor of writing, as the best preparation for public speech. "Stilus optimus et praestantissimus dicendi effector ac magister," said Cicero, "The pen is the most effective teacher of eloquence"; and this saying became a proverb in the famous Roman schools of rhetoric, for we afterwards find Quintilian commenting on it, and demanding, equally with Cicero, assiduous practice with the pen. And yet neither of these masters of ornate and polished diction would have ventured to appear before an audience with a manuscript in his hand. Whatever was carefully written out must be duly memorized, and delivered as if impromptu, if they would satisfy the nice ears of a Roman audience.

The written sermon allows, or seems to allow, more care in the arrangement of arguments, and in the selection of exact and felicitous language; it demands a certain amount of laborious preparation; more confidence exists in the mind of the speaker, nor is the audience, seeing the manuscript, apprehensive of failure; a sermon, once prepared, will do duty several times, and thus a store of digested material can be laid aside for service, in times of sickness, or when the mind is distracted by other cares; the people have become so accustomed to this method, as not only to tolerate it, but in many sections of the country to be impatient of any other. All these and many other arguments favor a written style. Especially should beginners, in the difficult art of public speech, avoid too venturesome essay in flight from the secure perch of a written discourse; they may catch a fall, the memory of which will embarrass all their life. The stern discipline of the pen, maintained during ten or twenty years, is requisite for obtaining that finish of style and copiousness of diction which render public speaking a pleasure to the hearer. The example of so many illustrious men, who have been leaders of the church for generations, and have left their published discourses as evidence of their power, is a testimony not to be lightly passed over, of the possibilities inherent in this venerable and respectable manner of preparation for the pulpit. Written sermons could not have obtained so wide popularity, nor so long have maintained

their position, unless there were solid reasons to be adduced in their favor.

At the same time, equally weighty reasons support the custom of extemporaneous, or, as we should prefer to call them, unwritten sermons. Speech is natural to all men, writing is the cultivated habit of a few. Speech is practiced from earliest childhood, on all possible occasions; writing is the painful effort of secluded hours. The language of persuasion, of passion, of entreaty or command, of affection, lies nearest to the vernacular of common speech. Those who write are compelled, if they would make their discourse effective with the people, to imitate as nearly as possible the language of every-day life. The written language is naturally the style of scholars, of those accustomed to books, of the cultured and refined. It contains a larger proportion of the foreign elements of the English tongue, and more inversions of the sentence, than properly belong to the language native to men's business and bosoms. To avoid this scholastic element, and bring the style to the requirements of a popular audience, requires a distinct effort, which is a constant embarrassment to the writer, whereas a speaker does it unconsciously. There would seem an intrinsic absurdity, were we less accustomed to it, in rising to address an assembly, with a manuscript carefully laid upon the desk, and emotion a week old, instead of uttering the warm and immediate promptings of the heart.

If we seek the analogy of other professions, the

prevailing practice is uniformly in favor of extempore speech. No lawyer would venture to address a jury from manuscript; at least, we have never heard of its being done, save in one notable instance. Even when the case is argued before the court, and the brief has been carefully written out, printed, and put in the hands of the judges, the successful lawyers assure us that they must go before the bench, and argue the case, in spontaneous speech, in order to secure to their argument a due attention. The senators and members of Congress write much and often upon any subject before the public mind. Long letters to their constituents prepare them to consent to the views of the leaders. Editorials are written, for newspapers at home, or for the metropolitan press. Perhaps a speech is prepared, with much consumption of the midnight oil, and, with expressions of applause duly intermingled, is printed in the *Congressional Globe*. But, after all this, if the senator should rise in his seat and undertake to read the speech, the rapidly-thinning benches, or the assiduous efforts of his brother senators to finish their morning correspondence, would soon convince him that even veteran statesmen prefer an unwritten address to however elaborate a written speech. To attempt the latter on the platform of a political convention, or in presence of an excited popular audience, would be such an absurdity, that probably not the most timid speaker would dare attempt it.

In times of revival, when the fires of conviction,

and the fervors of awakened zeal are arousing a slumbering church, the temptation is strong, in the most conservative pulpit, to leave the sluggish manuscript at home, and trust to the inspiration of the hour.

Unwritten speech is more effective, intrinsically. A given quantity of thought and expression will go much further, if it apparently arises spontaneously from the occasion. There may be attained a freshness of illustration, and appositeness of thought, by the preacher who is an adept in extempore speech, which are impossible of achievement by one who is confined to the reading of previous preparations. In the ardor of delivery, new thoughts come to the mind on wings of fire, vivid metaphors and similes arrive in troops, eager for a hearing. Any accidental occurrences, such as the dimness or brilliance of the lamps, the outcries of a mob, the departure of an aged man, have been seized by skillful speakers as occasions of eloquence. Yet they certainly could never have regarded them other than as disagreeable interruptions, had they been confined to their notes.

Extempore sermons require, not indeed less time, but less of vital energy, in the preparation, than do written ones. Accordingly, more energy is left for deep and protracted study. An indolent man might use this surplus as an occasion for the flesh, but such an one, if he used written discourses, would exchange frequently, or preach old sermons. There is a directness of appeal natural to unwritten addresses, which

is far less likely to be attained, in the opposite method. It can be, indeed, but as a rule it will not. Fervid and impassioned appeals to the conscience of the hearer are generally born of the intense convictions which sway the preacher's mind at the close of the service. They come then, naturally, indeed inevitably. The soul has burst its conventional bounds, and like a river too full for its banks, overflows in a resistless current of entreaty, or warning, or expostulation.

It is not necessary to argue for the exclusive use of the extemporaneous method. The truth, as is so often the case, does not lie here in the mean, but in the extremes. Both methods have their advantages, and will be cultivated by one, sedulous to use all his powers in the service of the Master. For great and formal occasions, possibly for the principal Sunday service all through his life, for difficult funeral discourses, for discussion of the profoundest themes of the gospel, the preacher will wisely adhere to the time-honored custom of written discourse, at least in the older communities, and among the fastidious audiences of the larger churches. Before ministerial associations, or on other occasions of critical interest, it needs large confidence to forsake the orderly paths of written speech. But innumerable other occasions arise, on which it is a real advantage to be able to speak in an effective and finished manner, without previous elaboration of a manuscript. On the Sunday evening, when the congregation is largely com-

posed of young people, or of strangers who have strayed in without very much interest in religion, and whose attention must be caught by a livelier style of discourse; at prayer-meetings, and weekly lectures, and frequent funerals, for which no adequate time of preparation is allowed; in the debates of conventions, and councils, at popular gatherings for temperance or other reforms, and generally whenever the minister is liable to be called upon for a "few remarks,"—an immense advantage accrues to one who has so trained himself that ripe and finished speech has become a second nature. He cannot be caught unawares. His occasional services will be more popular than his set discourses.

There is a reflex influence, seldom appreciated, but extremely important, in weighing the relative advantages of written or unwritten sermons. That is, each style, if practiced with care, modifies and perfects the other. The preacher who writes habitually, with utmost pains for many years, will have attained a power of consecutive thought, and of constructing well-balanced periods, which are most commonly absent from the discourse of speakers, untrained by the pen. On the other hand, the self-confidence felt by a habitual extempore speaker, his readiness for all emergencies, and power of thinking on his feet, enable him to read his written discourses, with less of that rigid confinement to his manuscript, which is the principal defect of those who have allowed themselves a servile adherence to it. Our

opinion on this point is confirmed by the authority of the ancient writers. Thus Cicero (de orat. 1, 33): "He who comes to speech from the custom of writing, has such a training, that when he speaks without premeditation, he still preserves the finish of a written style. As, when the rowers quicken their pace, and then stop rowing, the boat still retains the impulse of the oars and continues on its course; so in a long oration, the extemporaneous additions retain the style and force of those parts which had been previously written." In like manner Quintilian (Inst. or. 10, 3): "We must write, therefore, as carefully and as much as we can; for, as the ground by being dug to a greater depth becomes more fitted for fructifying and nourishing seeds, so improvement of the mind, acquired from more than mere superficial cultivation, pours forth the fruits of study in richer abundance, and retains them with greater fidelity. For, without this precaution, the very faculty of speaking extempore, will but furnish us with empty loquacity, and words born on the lips."

Written sermons are, on the whole, more concise, more pungent in expression, more freighted with thought, nicer in discrimination, more delicate in the play of fancy. Extemporaneous sermons, of the better class, are marked by boldness and simplicity of thought, fervor of emotion, vivid illustration, an idiomatic and vernacular diction; and are more alive with the passions and interests of the present moment. Each may impart some of its valuable qual-

ities to the other. It will do no harm, but will be a mutual benefit, if the preacher do his best alternately in either mode. For freedom and variety, for immediate contact with the people, for readiness of resource on unforeseen occasions, for all the countless smaller occasions, on which a written sermon would be an impertinence, he will assiduously train himself to a ready utterance of well-considered thought that need not shame the most august pulpit. For nicety of chosen words, elegance of metaphor, lucid arrangement of scripture texts, perspicuous and terse definition of doctrine, careful analysis of character, he will retire to his study, and with pen in hand laboriously correct his manuscript.

There is much of, so to speak, extempore writing not to be commended. A sermon, for example, must be prepared, and few hours remain in which to do it. The pen travels with frantic haste, as the hour points to midnight on Saturday; or even rushes along towards the end as the bell is tolling for service on Sunday morning. The discourse hastily written, uncorrected, hardly legible, with the ink not yet dried, and the leaves in disorder, is seized, and the belated preacher breathlessly mounts the pulpit stairs, hardly conscious of what he has done, or what effect it is likely to produce. If, however, he has the capacity of extempore speech, he would much prefer to take a text and make a brief analysis, then sleep as well on it as Webster did on his reply to Hayne, and go calmly to church, trust-

ing to his previously accumulated stores of argument and illustration. Not that the latter method is recommended, save on an emergency, but it seems preferable to the haste, and lack of finish, and almost irreligious temper of the former. The habit of careful writing induces a habit of adequate preparation. The faculty of ready speech supersedes the necessity of unkempt and hasty writing. Each style has thus a powerful restraining influence upon the other, likely to make both more perfect than either alone would be.

There are many popular anecdotes afloat which show a keen appreciation on the part of the people of the infelicities attending the exclusive use of written sermons. The numberless stories of preachers, who have left the sermon at home, or have brought the wrong one, or have allowed "thirdly" to fly out of the window, or dropped the paper as Irving did in one of his earlier discourses, or have lost the end of the sentence, or who have written in appropriate places to weep here and pause there, indicate how close to absurdity lies the venerable tradition of written discourses. Without doubt the people at large are more taken with even a tolerable measure of success in extempore speaking than with the ablest addresses from a manuscript. It is partly because they better appreciate the inherent difficulties of speech, partly because they enjoy that to which it is easier to listen.

It is true that the extemporaneous method has its dangers also, perhaps even greater ones. For a safe

mediocrity commend us to a manuscript. There is something in it at any rate, while extempore sermons have been preached which contained nothing but the fatal facility of empty phrases. A halting speaker, who hesitates for the next word, requires frequent correction of his sentences, and leaves many of them in ungrammatical confusion; a verbose speaker, uttering grandiloquent words in a lavish flow, as if the flood-gates of speech had been opened and could never be shut; an inaccurate speaker, never sure of his facts, or dates, or scriptural quotations; an illogical speaker, forgetful of protasis and apodosis, of undistributed middle, and who is impaled, so to speak, on the horns of his own dilemmas; a speaker, whose thoughts are rambling, or disconnected, or insignificant—and all these are patent faults of the extemporaneous style —tempt a cultivated hearer to sigh for the modest security of a manuscript. He who would succeed in this high and difficult art must contentedly brave these dangers, and many more, must incur the apprehension of listening friends, and the cold criticism of enemies, the mortification of frequent failures, the distress of having done less than his best.

Is it, then, worth while to attempt the cultivation of an extemporaneous style of sermonizing? Has it advantages which compensate for all its difficulties and dangers? We answer, unhesitatingly, yes. Not that it should supersede the written sermon, nor, perhaps, in the older churches rank equally with it; but

on a great variety of occasions it is a most useful capacity. All ministers must speak extemporaneously at least one-third of the time. Our design will be accomplished, if we can induce the careful maintenance even of that proportion. Moreover, there can be no reasonable doubt, among those who are familiar with the effects of preaching, that while the learned and cultivated prefer on the whole a written style, it is far otherwise with the vast masses who most need the gospel. As a rule, the latter are attracted only by speech, which is or which appears to be extemporaneous. They delight in a ready and forcible address, filled with practical thoughts, and with illustrations taken from common life. If it be our object, not merely to delight the cultured few, but to impress, convince, and benefit the unlettered many, doubtless no furnishing is more requisite than the faculty of extempore speech. Especially is it true, that the attenuated audiences of Sunday evening can only be retained and increased, if at all, by a new and vigorous style of popular preaching. Some clergymen have tried to attain this end, by attractive music, and in the larger cities it cannot be dispensed with. But this will not long avail to draw and interest the people, unless the sermon be of that simple structure, homely and penetrating diction, apt metaphor, and telling appeal, which are the most natural fruit of the extemporaneous method. And among the newer churches, especially in the West, there is incessant demand for this popularizing of pulpit dis-

course, on Sunday morning as well as evening. The people not only listen with impatience, they will not come a second time to hear a preacher who seems to them dull or uninteresting. The graduate of our seminaries who can only read his sermons, however excellent, will, in the newer states, be often mortified to find himself delivering his beaten oil to empty pews, while some incoherent ranter across the way has drawn a crowd, and, for the time being, revolutionized the town. It is not that the people admire ignorance or incoherence. But they do admire, and always throng to hear, facile and fluent speech upon whatever subject.

Preaching the gospel is a difficult art, even for those who possess every advantage. Any contribution, however humble, which promises assistance in it, will not be disregarded by the diligent student. The recommendations made in the following chapters have, at least, the merit of having been tested by actual use, and as such are proposed with some confidence.

II.

PREPARATION,—SPECIAL.

Before proceeding further with the discussion it is necessary to prevent misconception by defining what is meant by an extemporaneous style of preaching. The remark of Dr. Emmons, that "the chief requisites of an extemporaneous preacher are ignorance, impudence, and presumption," could only have been called forth by harangues of a very different quality from anything recommended in this volume. The same caustic divine is quoted by Dr. Smalley as saying: "It is a great blessing to be able to talk half an hour about nothing. The great body of extempore preachers are *pro tempore* preachers." There is thus an ambiguity in the word "extempore," which allows much witty animadversion. An extempore sermon, "from the time," may mean a discourse, whose subject, thoughts, and arrangement, as well as language, arise from the promptings of the moment; or, it may mean, one in which all the preparation has been made that is possible, save that it has not been spoken as written, sentence by sentence. Dr. Shedd in his *Homiletics* endeavors to define this method, by saying that "extempore," in this connection, means, not from the present time,

but from all time. The extemporaneous preacher, he says, speaks from all his past experience, using the accumulated thought and knowledge of all his former study. But, as Dr. Shedd very properly adds, this is equally true of a written sermon; for, if it be a good one, it will be an expression of the writer's whole previous life. There is a current anecdote, that when a celebrated divine had preached a sermon of unusual ability, a friend asked him, "Doctor, how long did it take you to write that sermon?" "Forty years," was the prompt reply. All the treasures of his ripe experience in the world, all the wide reading of many years, the trained skill of innumerable sermons written and delivered before, had conspired to the perfection of that one discourse. So it will not sufficiently define an extempore sermon to say that it is one which draws upon all the past training of the speaker for its effectiveness; for that is equally true of a thoroughly-prepared manuscript.

An extemporaneous sermon, then, is one on which all possible labor may have been previously expended, but which relies upon the occasion for the language in which it is expressed. It may even happen that it shall have been completely written out, once and again, for there are extempore preachers who spare no pains; but the manuscript is left at home and its words are allowed to drop from the memory. This latter is recommended by Dr. John Hall in his Yale lectures on preaching, as his chosen method of preparation for the pulpit. It is a very

admirable one, and ranks among the best modes of preparing a finished extemporaneous discourse.

It may be asked, here, if the words were forgotten, what use in writing them? Or, if the discourse has once been written, why not read it? To the first question we reply, it is not possible to prepare too carefully; to the second, that a new and electric quality is added to extempore speech, which is seldom compassed by reading from a manuscript. Generally, however, the written notes will be ample, if they embrace about one-fourth the words of a sermon. The proposition and definitions should be written in full, with extreme care. Indeed, it is advisable to write and re-write them several times over, in order to secure clearness, compactness, and brevity. Next, the divisions of the subject and its logical connections must be written in full, that the chain of reasoning may be accurately linked, in due sequence. The skeleton of the sermon having been thus prepared, it will suffice to indicate illustrations, historical instances, or scriptural quotations, by a single word that recalls them to the memory. When we reflect how large a proportion of any discourse is taken up by these last, we shall see that ample room is allowed in our estimate of one-fourth the words, for a very complete statement of all the thoughts that are new and peculiar to it. In fact, it will be a sermon of unusual originality, if one-fourth of it is so novel as to require a full development in writing in order to unfold it clearly to the mind of the speaker.

Perhaps it is a subject which he has treated many times, as, for instance, the Atonement. All the principal theories that have striven to elucidate it are familiar to him. He has often meditated the scripture texts that bear most directly upon it. Numberless illustrations have crowded his mind relative to every shade of the subject. Its magnitude, mystery, grandeur, have held him in awe. Its unspeakable benefits to humanity have frequently called forth his enthusiasm, and have been the basis of many an appeal to his hearers. All that he can do, therefore, in any new sermon on the Atonement, is to select some phase of the great theme, and dwell upon it for the edification of the audience. The special features of the discourse will properly be fully delineated in his brief, while all that is of a more general nature, and that would belong equally to many other sermons on the same subject, is sufficiently indicated by catch-words.

It will be easily inferred, from what has been said, that an extempore sermon demands as much previous effort and preparation, as a written one. If there be any difference, the former requires a greater diligence and more thorough study. The mistake of many, who have tried this method and failed in it, was in supposing that something good could be obtained without labor. But emphatically in extempore preaching, from nothing, nothing comes. A hastily-chosen subject, a few disjointed thoughts, vague remembrance of illustrative facts, will not

satisfy any one, least of all the preacher himself. On the other hand, no toil is more fruitful than that bestowed on the unwritten sermons of the earlier years of our ministry. It not only improves the given discourse, it secures a large stock of material for future use.

When the skeleton has been carefully written out, the next thing in order is what the old writers call "meditation" of the subject. Each head and subdivision will be taken in its order, and made the topic of protracted study. All the books in the preacher's library, that throw any light upon them, will be examined afresh. Encyclopedias will be ransacked to give historical references their required accuracy. If any proposed illustration is drawn from the sciences, the proper treatise will be consulted, in order to secure absolute correctness. For nothing is forgiven the extemporaneous preacher. If he were reading from a manuscript, the audience might take for granted, that he had studied his subject, and might allow his statements to pass without critical examination. But they are thoroughly alert to watch for blemishes in an extempore sermon, at least until the preacher has perfectly won their confidence, and every assertion will be challenged, his facts questioned, his dates doubted, his very pronunciation disputed. He need not shrink from this ordeal. He has had a liberal education. He has the week in which to prepare the special theme. No need of saying anything he is not sure of, so long as there

are other things, that may be spoken to edification. It is as inexcusable to make mistakes of fact, or misstatements of doctrine, as it would be for a teacher before the class to be ill-prepared on the lesson.

It is a good plan, also, to meditate the subdivisions of a discourse to a much greater extent than is actually required for the sermon in hand, and to pursue the thought into all its ramifications. Even though it may not be needed, or used, a sense of power is acquired in familiarity with the subject, and ability to speak on it to any extent. It is as if one were appointed to lead a party through the forest, and should, in order to qualify himself for the task, first go through the forest in every direction, and become perfectly familiar with it. He will not take the party over all the paths, in which he himself has traveled; one path is enough. But he can more easily select the best path, and feels secure against losing his way, if he knows the forest from beginning to end. A new subject is like a virgin forest. The preacher at first timidly blazes a road through it. But after many days of study and meditation, he knows it thoroughly, and can begin anywhere, and go through it in any direction. This is a most important qualification, for taking his audience along with him. They discover, very soon, that his most accidental words are the fruit of long consideration. He evidently knows more about it than they do, and they willingly follow a competent leader. An occasional blemish of language, or infelicity of expression,

will not be noticed, but there is no excuse for lack of familiarity with the thoughts cognate to the theme. It was the preacher's business to know them. If he did not, he should have left the subject for the present, and have discoursed upon something he did know.

If we analyze Robert Hall's tremendous sermon on "Modern Infidelity considered with reference to its influence on society," which the author assures us was not committed to paper until after it was delivered, as he was not in the habit of writing his sermons; we are struck, not only by the majesty of the thought and the splendor of the diction, but by the evident familiarity of the speaker with every phase of infidelity, which he had contemplated in all its ghastly details, before uttering his terrible arraignment of the principles of the French Revolution, and the then fashionable skepticism. This appears both from the notes appended to the discourse, and from the very structure of its magnificent periods. It was the result of intense and protracted thought upon all parts of the subject. As all minds were then filled with apprehension on account of the sanguinary results of the new philosophy, it was less difficult to prepare, or to listen to, such a virile discourse, than it would be now, even supposing the preacher to have the abilities of Robert Hall, which certainly have not been often matched in the history of oratory. But the point, to which attention is directed, is the necessity of long-continued, thorough, and detailed

study of the subject, before one can speak upon it with any degree of power.

The "meditation" does not exhaust the labor of preparation required by an extempore sermon of the first class. In order to acquire flexibility of language, and readiness of expression, it is necessary to go over the whole mentally, and state fully in as finished diction as we are capable of, the proposed discourse. This would better be done at least three, and the writer has often done it six times, before feeling satisfied that due preparation had been made. No attempt to retain the same words each time is recommended. Indeed, it is better not to have the same expressions. If the mind is in a fertile condition, the thoughts will easily clothe themselves in suitable language; and the fact of their having been stated in a variety of ways before-hand will conduce to affluence in the presence of the people. One must be very much embarrassed to fail in uttering a thought that has been formulated already several times in the mind. The ideas of the sermon can also be in this way set forth mentally, in several different styles, plain, forcible, ornamental, or otherwise, so that a particular part can be afterwards adapted to the moods of the audience; or the whole remodeled in character, should the congregation be, as it often is, different from what was anticipated. It may chance that, on a rainy day, the audience is principally composed of men, who appreciate a solid discourse full of argument and plainly expressed.

Or it may happen that, on a fine day, there is present an unusually large number of children and young people. In such a case, the speaker is fortunate, who has in reserve ample stores of illustration, for engaging their attention, and fixing the sermon in their memory. A speaker who is confined to any one set of words, or any given style, has greatly diminished his power.

A caution may properly be interposed at this point not to bestow a disproportionate amount of effort upon the first half of the discourse. The writer has listened to preachers who began well, but failed in the conclusion; their exordium was sententious and directly in the line of the subject; the thought was well laid out and effectively developed; but its further illustration was languid, and its applications of a very vague and general sort. Such a sermon might be compared to a stream starting in the mountains, vigorous and clear, but afterwards grown turbid and lost in the sands. The remedy for this is to give, in the preparation, as much attention to the close as to the commencement. As the mind is apt to flag in meditating an entire subject, it is well to begin sometimes at the middle and proceed to the end, or even to give an entire forenoon to the applications and termination of the discourse. Thus a due proportion will be observed in the parts of it, and the commencement will not be unduly protracted.

The sermon having been properly meditated and

suitably expressed, next in order arises the necessity of fixing in the memory those features of it that the preacher wishes to have obvious to his recollection. Particular precepts for assisting the memory will be given in a subsequent chapter. Our object at this time is merely to show how much and what parts of the sermon must be retained. And in the first place, we should say, make no attempt to remember words. They are the most fleeting of things. Their evanescence is like an airy mist, which disappears in the grasp. Moreover, a subject duly meditated, as was long ago observed by the poet Horace, will find no lack of words in which to express its thought. In like manner, Cicero remarks that "copiousness of matter produces copiousness of language." Nor is it essential to remember all the steps of the argument in detail. If they are logically connected, and flow naturally out of the theme, they will recur to the mind of themselves at the proper time. The things which are essential to be remembered are the text, the main proposition derived from it, the principal subdivisions and the chief illustrations. There ought, also, to be a clearly-defined object before the speaker of what he wishes to accomplish by the discourse. To aim at nothing and hit it, is the infelicity of many unwritten, as of written sermons. These few points should be gone over so often as to become a part of our mental organization for the time being. They can be so vividly impressed upon the mind, that it is hardly possible to forget them.

It will conduce to easy recollection of the outline, if it is based upon a textual division, or arises naturally from the thought of the chapter. Then each clause of the verse, or the verses of the context, of themselves suggest the proposed treatment. No better illustration of what is here meant can be given than is contained in the sermons of Rev. F. W. Robertson. They are among the noblest discourses that have been published during the century, and are pertinent to our present purpose, because, although thoroughly prepared, they were not written out until the evening after their delivery. The author reported them for a friend, with no thought of publication. These sermons are nearly all either textual, being based upon the natural divisions of the text; or they follow and elucidate the thoughts of an entire chapter, as in the celebrated lectures on the Corinthians. Doubtless the preacher's memory was largely aided by the naturalness of his divisions. The thought, though far from commonplace, was obvious to the mind, which had once developed it from the text. Indeed, the connection is so perfect that it is hard for even a casual reader to forget the striking ideas that, under his magic touch, seem to spring from the text of their own accord.

There is one danger in becoming familiar with these sermons that, it is so easy to remember their outlines as to tempt the preacher to reproduce them in his own discourses: which is a further proof of the ease with which a properly-developed outline is

carried in the mind, and is a cogent encouragement to the beginner, that he need not apprehend a failure of memory, if only the outline is a clear, and logical one.

In the appendix to Robertson's life are given the notes of two lectures on Genesis, which are worth studying as an illustration of his method of preparing for the pulpit. They were written on the backs of old letters, partly in ink, partly in pencil, and were evidently carried in his pocket and enriched by the thoughts that occurred to him in his rambles. These were not taken into the pulpit, but an abstract of them was jotted down, containing merely the heads of the discourse, and a few leading thoughts under each; and even this was dropped out of his hand as soon as he had fairly begun his sermon. The notes are very full, covering two or three closely-printed pages. They embrace every idea and shade of an idea, the scriptural quotations, and several applications. If the smaller connecting words should be supplied, they would probably constitute a tolerably full report of the sermon as it was finally preached.

Dr. R. S. Storrs delivered in 1875 three fascinating lectures, before the Union Theological Seminary of New York, which have since been published, under the title "Preaching without Notes." In them he gives, by implication, his own method of preparing extempore sermons. After preparing the plan, which he says should be "simple, obvious, natural, and clearly-articulated in its parts," he

would think the subject carefully through, making a brief memorandum of such passages in literature, historical examples, and scenes in nature, as may be suggested to the mind. On a reperusal of the notes, on Saturday evening, other thoughts will occur, which may also be noted down, while the former notes are reviewed. In preaching, he would only dwell upon those parts of the outline which present themselves obviously to the memory, as a successful speech requires that the recollective faculties be held in abeyance so that the "spontaneous, suggestive, creative powers may have continual and unhindered play."

In contrast with the methods already described, it is the advice of some of the ablest speakers to prepare the discourse without committing a single word to paper. This, as we have been informed, was the method suggested by a distinguished statesman to one of the ablest living American preachers, He said that, in his opinion, the best way of preparing sermons, was to compose them in the mind, fully and perfectly, then preach them, and afterwards to write out and correct them, if they are to be preserved. Judging by the results, in this particular instance, this must be an excellent method of preparation; but it requires more maturity of mind, a more finished style, riper scholarship, than can be usually predicated of beginners. To conceive the discourse as a whole, separate it into its component parts, keep them distinct from each other, and express them elegantly, without even the simplest out-

line on paper, as a string to hang the pearls upon, is a mental effort somewhat too severe, until years of discipline have thoroughly trained the intellectual faculties. Moreover, few preachers, it is to be feared, would have the resolution to sit down deliberately on Monday, and write out the sermons of the previous day. Mondays are usually days of discouragement. The reaction from severe work has set in, and the mind would much better be relaxed and suffered to lie fallow for a day. Unless, however, the sermons are written out with some degree of fullness, they will very soon pass from the memory, and become as faded and as hard to restore as the first writing on a palimpsest. It seems to us, therefore, that this method, although an available one, is liable to very serious disadvantages, in practical use.

It may be reasonably objected that any of the modes of preparation hitherto described, ranging as they do, all the way from a completed manuscript to a discourse fully elaborated in the mind, leave very little that is of an extemporaneous nature in the sermon as finally spoken. This objection is well taken. It is for this reason that the writer prefers to call them "unwritten," rather than extempore sermons. But it seemed best to retain the title under which they are popularly mentioned. A weightier objection lies in the fact that the amount of time and effort required for their elaboration, would seem to be better expended, and with more lasting results, upon a manuscript. But no one, who really desires to succeed in the extemporaneous style, will begrudge

any effort, however costly, that can secure that result. He is willing to train himself, at least, as carefully as the organist who leads his choir; and the latter must practice for years before he can venture upon the simplest tune before a great congregation. But, as the organist, having once learned, with infinite patience, the art of playing, can easily play afterwards any tune, or improvise to the delight of cultivated audiences; so the pains required by early efforts at extemporaneous preaching have their reward in after years. Each sermon well studied makes the subsequent sermon more easy. Treasures of language, information and illustration, are hidden away in the mind. Innumerable topics of thought have been made familiar. Confidence is gradually attained, which enables the speaker to stand without trepidation before the largest assembly. The memory becomes so trained that one reading of the brief will fix it indelibly in all its parts. And after a half score of years of conscientious preparation of unwritten discourses once a week, the preacher will have reached sufficient mastery of the art to speak on an emergency with very little special study.

It is true there are some preachers, as there are some musicians, who can never get on smoothly without their notes. These would do well to confine themselves to manuscript discourses. But if any consider it worth their while to attempt the more popular style, they may be assured that it is possible of attainment by most men; but only after a severe and protracted discipline.

III.

PREPARATION, GENERAL.

It will very sensibly diminish the labor of preparing any single sermon if the preacher has accumulated previously a store of, so to speak, the raw material from which sermons are made. This is useful for all preachers, but is almost essential for an extemporaneous preacher; for while a written sermon may be put together of set design, by the hard labor of a few hours, an extempore one, to be successful, must be a kind of growth. It must arise with a certain spontaneity, and, as it were, develop itself in the mind. This requires time, and often a long time. The only way, therefore, to have a sufficient supply of material for sermons is to make special provision for it. It is a good plan to have a large blank book, or several of them of uniform size, and the pages numbered. Loose sheets can be used, and have been recommended by Dr. Dale in his Yale lectures, but they are apt to be lost. Our design contemplates the preservation for years of all the notes that may be made. If worth making, they will be worth preserving. There is no greater, or more foolish, waste than that of a speaker who allows his seed-thoughts to become scattered, and

who hunts vaguely around for a text or a subject as he may happen to want one. If prudent, he will preserve them as carefully as the farmer his seed-corn, or the nurseryman his young trees. They may be insignificant now, but will grow presently to something valuable. The blank book should always be at hand to receive any suggestions that may occur to the mind in study or reading. Especially if one has the habit of reading the Bible every morning when the mind is fresh, the sacred pages will sparkle with suggestions of every kind suitable for edification of the people. Views of the divine nature, of human need, of the majesty of God's law, of the mercy of Christ, of the value of prayer, will be suggested, not altogether new, perhaps, but fresh and in new connections. This parable describes a certain man in the parish with vivid accuracy. That consolation is needed by some family in trouble. A precept is seen to strike at the root of a popular vice. As the thought comes, it should be noted down with all that the mind furnishes on the subject. It may be only a line or two, or it may be several pages. Let the thoughts come as rapidly as the pencil can record them, without any attempt at order or elegance of expression. There are few hours of real study so barren as not to furnish one or more of these seedlings of a sermon. In the course of a year several hundred would be accumulated. As, however, many of them will relate to similar themes, when the preacher begins to consolidate them,

he will be fortunate if the year has furnished a hundred distinct subjects suitable for sermons. These notes can be written in succession in the book and easily posted by a system of cross references to the several pages, on which the same subject is treated of. For example, on page ten is a thought relating to prayer, and on page fifty another. If the figure 10 be placed opposite the latter, and 50 in the margin opposite the former; the moment the eye falls on either, it knows where to look for the related thought. The blank book becomes in this way what might be called in the language of the merchants, a "journalized ledger" of our thinking. Much time is thus saved in hunting for kindred thoughts, and after a little time whole skeletons of sermons will seem to start of themselves from the closely-written pages.

In reading, also, other books than the Bible many thoughts will arise in the mind, and especially many illustrations of scriptural texts, historical facts, biographical reminiscences, scraps of poetry, quotations having the racy flavor of proverbs, in short, a multitude of things germane to popular discourse. These may either be transferred to the note-book, in connection with some scripture text, or if too long they may be indicated by a reference. It is surprising how many materials for sermons one will find, if alert for several months together to this particular point. The world is full of analogies of spiritual truth, human life overflows with instances of its

power, or the sad necessity for it. The sermons will thus gain a variety and fullness in the clustered thoughts that are not possible to one who fails to conserve the results of his daily studies.

Much time may be usefully spent over such a note-book, in turning over its pages with the intent to connect and systematize the various scattered thoughts relating to a given subject; or by going slowly through it, some fragment of thought already recorded is quite sure to suggest other thoughts of a kindred nature. When a new sermon is to be prepared, instead of seeking at random for a subject, the preacher can turn to it, almost certain of finding among a hundred themes some one that suits his present purpose. Possibly it may only be the germ of a discourse; quite often he will be gratified to find a subject partially developed and almost ready to his hand, with several striking illustrations that may make the fortune of his sermon. The book becomes in this way a great economist of time. The hours otherwise apt to be spent in a useless and tedious search for a suitable text are occupied in molding and bringing to perfection some fruitful thought that has been often studied before until its outlines have become perfectly familiar. As the hand becomes skillful by long practice, it will be found that full and complete skeletons of sermons have been written out unawares, and at the impulse of the moment, requiring but very little rearrangement and a minimum of labor to adapt them to the

needs of the pulpit. This method of storing up the select results of our year's reading and thinking in a note-book, like honey in a hive, while useful for all ministers, is almost essential to the success of an extempore preacher, because he needs to be more familiar with the subjects of his sermons, and to have given them a more genetic development.

There is another habit which will prove of utmost advantage to a preacher, if begun in his early ministry and persisted in to the end; that is the so-called "homiletic habit," or the practice of taking a text every day, or at least two or three times in a week, and building upon it an outline discourse as complete and finished as can be made in an hour. If a minister in the early months of the year, when comparatively fresh from vacation, has the active energy to prepare such skeleton sermons for a number of months in succession, he will not be at any loss during the remainder of the year for material that can be readily fashioned into his completed discourses. Even though many of these skeletons should never be used for Sunday sermons they will prove extremely convenient for prayer-meetings, lectures and funeral addresses; giving the hard-pressed clergyman somewhat of the same feeling of security in regard to his supply of material for preaching that he would have financially, if he could always keep a small balance at his banker's. Nothing secures more perfectly that sense of ample resources and reserved power which add so much to the force of an

extempore sermon, as the long-continued habit of analyzing and recomposing texts in this manner; for, in speaking, the moment any text that has been so treated flashes upon the mind, the thoughts that were developed from it come thronging in its train, and allow the discourse to be logically expanded to any extent.

It is said that a living American author of great popularity keeps his manuscript six months ahead of the demands of the printer. Only thus can he secure that freedom from nervous apprehension which enables him to do his best work. A preacher does wisely who is always similarly beforehand with his work. He cannot, perhaps, keep six months in advance, but he may easily be one month ahead of the probable demands of the pulpit. If, by a little extra labor at the beginning, or by utilizing his exchanges, he can get eight or ten finished sermons laid away in his desk, all prepared for the pulpit, and, like so many loaded pistols, ready to be fired at a moment's notice, it will be a useful provision. He has the secure feeling of being prepared against the coming Sabbath, no matter how busy the week may be. More than this, he will inevitably, by looking them over occasionally to decide upon a selection, become very familiar with the trains of thought which they contain. Every time, also, that they are read over, new thoughts or fresh references to books read will occur that may be added to the enrichment of the discourse.

The writer likes to have appended to the arguments of an extemporaneous sermon, a double or triple set of scripture proofs and illustrations, under each general division, to be used when the discourse is repeated, or that he may have a variety from which to select at the first preaching; or in case an illustration should miss its mark with the audience, there may be more arrows in the quiver, allowing him to try again.

In treating more at large of the question of providing material for sermons of this kind, we remark that a novice in the art will find his best account in taking a great subject, or in commenting upon extended passages of scripture. A written sermon may be like a fine-line engraving, in its minute treatment of a limited theme; an extempore sermon is more like a broad and rapid sketch, which demands bold outlines and strongly-marked figures. The former may resemble an exquisitely cut cameo; the latter is a statue for the public square, and should be simple in outline and massive in treatment. A great subject, by which is meant any of the principal theses of theology, or morals, will have been handled by able professors, in the lecture-room of the seminary, and has been studied in the text-books for months together. Thus a large amount of material is already at hand, in the note books or the memory, too scholastic, indeed, in its present form, but easily popularized, by argument, illustration and appeal, so as to be made suitable for an audience. An argu-

ment for the Being of God, or a discourse upon his Attributes, the Inspiration and Canon of Scripture, Freedom of the Will and Human Responsibility, the function of the Church, the Person of Christ, the value of a Mediator, the Atonement, Eschatology, are in themselves mighty themes, requiring no magnifying, but only clear statement, and earnest application.

As in traveling among the mountains, the guide may be a very commonplace man, and of simple speech, yet if he can take the party safely across the glaciers and along the precipices, he will be dignified by his surroundings and secure of attention to his lightest word; so the preacher who leads the people among the snow-capped mountains and awful declivities of religious thought, is helped in his impression, by the magnitude of the topics, and, so to speak, by the very majesty of the scenes themselves. The thoughts are great intrinsically and need no enlargement. There is more to be said than can be crowded into one discourse. No fear, therefore, of falling short, or of stopping through any lack of things to say. Besides, these are the mighty themes which most need to be brought to the attention of any congregation. It seems to us a fault of much modern preaching, that it confines its attention to very minute fractions of the truth. The greatness of the gospel is frittered away in refined discussions; as if an astronomer should neglect the great constellations, and restrict his investigations to doubtful questions about comets and asteroids.

A celebrated preacher has given a very good piece of advice, which is properly recalled in this connection. It is: That a young preacher will find a rich store of materials for sermons in popularizing what is called "Introduction" to the various books of scripture. A few sermons of great profit may be preached in this way, every year. The books of the Bible are, as a whole, very much of an unknown continent to the majority of very intelligent Christians. They have been all their life familiar with parts of the various books, with single narratives or with texts of unusual significance. But they have never been accustomed to contemplate the books as a whole, or in their relation to the other scriptural books. This, then, is a field comparatively new and very fertile. Each of the books of the Pentateuch, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the four gospels, any of the epistles, treated in a manner similar to that of the great commentators, if not with quite their ability, will be the rich substance of a sermon. Who wrote the book, when and why, what was his general course of thought, what particular errors are combated or truths emphasized, more than in another of the books of Scripture, how was the book preserved, and what reasons there are for believing it genuine;—a course of thought like this will bring the congregation more into the attitude of those who first heard the written record, and will reproduce some of their fresh emotions.

To go through one of the gospels in order, or

rapidly comment on any other of the chief books, if properly done, is a most useful exercise for both preacher and people. The book becomes, in this way, to the preacher, what "cases" are to a lawyer, giving an outline of the discourses already prepared, and requiring only careful arrangement and vigorous statement. This was a favorite method with Chrysostom and Augustine, as appears by the reports of their sermons, well worth studying even at this late day. It was also much practiced by some of the Puritan divines, albeit in written sermons. No one can turn over an alcove of old English theologians without being impressed by the massive solidity of the pulpit ministrations of Baxter, Owen, Charnock, or Bishop Hall.

Professor Phelps gives, in a recent newspaper article, some interesting reminiscences of Dr. Albert Barnes. Among other things, the professor says: "He made much of serial preaching, the sign commonly of thoughtful and thorough discussion in the pulpit. A series of doctrinal discourses for the Sunday mornings of every winter, and a series of Biblical expositions for the afternoons, constituted the usual material of his preaching. Yet the serial plan was held in easy hand, so that he could at any time suspend it for sermons which local and transient conditions might require in its place."

The people will, very likely, grow impatient of such a course, if protracted beyond five or six sermons in succession; but it may be quietly dropped

and resumed, again and again, until after some years the design is completed. In the newer parts of the country, so far as the writer has been able to observe, there is a great lack of familiarity with the Old Testament. The children are not taught, as they used to be, the early history of God's people. Even those whose flexible Bibles give evidence of patient study of the psalms or the gospels, have very little practical acquaintance with the rest of the sacred books. Accordingly, the historical portions of the Old Testament become a remarkably fertile field for the discovery of fresh and telling illustrations of the gospel message. The history of Abraham, Samuel, or Elijah, the life of David, the later kings, or any of the prophets, are sources of inexhaustible argument and comparison. This is very useful for Sunday evenings, as being almost entirely new ground to the miscellaneous audiences which flock idly from all parts of a city; more, it is to be feared, with the object of passing a pleasant hour, than for any deep spiritual impression. Still, these are the people who most need the gospel, and large profit will ensue, if we can interest them in better than merely sensational subjects.

Now that the latter subjects have been alluded to, the writer may be allowed to express the opinion, that it is poor policy to depend upon them to any considerable extent. Able and successful clergymen have done so, it is true, but such clergymen would have been successful in any event. For all

ordinary occasions it is far better to rely upon the dignified and solemn themes that will arise from any chapter of the Bible. If the people are taught to look for sensations, in a few months their appetite becomes jaded, and desirous of stronger stimulants. It is like the use of alcoholic stimulants. Stronger doses are continually required. Moreover, in any practical discussion of an ethical subject, allusion can easily be made to any extraordinary event that is occupying the public mind. It will be all the more effective, if it appears to arise naturally from a scriptural theme, than if chosen as a special topic for an entire discourse.

In addition to the subjects drawn directly from the Bible, there are innumerable points in which it touches human history, philosophy, government, and social science. Its truths find in the record of all great events a striking and dignified illustration. Its principles apply to the great movements of society, as well as to the duties of individuals. That preacher, therefore, will be best furnished with diversified materials for his sermons, who with active mind has studied widely every great branch of knowledge. It is very noticeable, for example, what breadth of view, solidity of argument, amplitude of treatment, and judicial fairness, characterize those preachers, who before entering the ministry, have spent some time in studying law. Although legal practice is not always marked by these qualities, yet the law-books are, being written for the

most part by eminent jurists. To have ground through Blackstone, or Story, or the law of Evidence, or a volume of Reports, will not only give something of a judicial quality to the mode of viewing a subject, but will suggest numberless practical applications of the gospel to human iniquity, and to the requirements of justice between man and man. We think that the effect of their legal studies is very observable in such men as Ambrose among the Fathers, among the Reformers, Calvin; and in this country, Dwight, Bushnell, Kirk, and some eminent living clergymen. A year spent in a lawyer's office is not by any means lost time, in preparation for the ministry.

It is hardly necessary to say that history furnishes an exhaustless field of study for the preacher, ennobling in itself, and rich in the material of noble thought. Cicero earnestly recommends the orator to study history, which will, he says, supply copiousness of illustration. The preacher has a still better reason for this study, for the Bible was composed by members of a race who were in intimate contact with the five great monarchies of the ancient world, Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Macedonian, and Roman. It behooves a man of God to know somewhat more of these empires and their decaying civilizations, than is furnished by the commentaries. *Rawlinson's Ancient Monarchies*, *Smith's and Layard's Discoveries in Nineveh*, *Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians*, *Merivale's History of the Roman People*,

and other works of this class, are admirable reading in themselves, and throw innumerable side-lights on the Scriptures, enabling us to understand them better, and enriching our resources for expository preaching. How can any one tell the power of Christianity in lifting the nations, as the continents were upheaved from the ocean, unless he has read the wonderful history of the Christian centuries, and has learned how the old heathen society, with its corruption and despair, was seized and remoulded by the gospel; until, through ages of darkness and confusion, slowly emerged a new literature, new states, the rich triumphs of modern science and art!

In metaphysics and philosophy, possibly, the average minister has been drilled, all that time will allow, for these are the favorite studies of the schools. But few are sufficiently posted on political economy and social science. Yet the questions treated in these departments of thought are continually seething in the community, and can be alluded to by the pulpit, in their general aspects, with both interest and profit.

It is unlikely, for instance, that a speaker will discourse wisely upon temperance legislation, the social evil, care of the poor, sanitary regulation, the Mormon question, exclusion of the Chinese, and similar themes, unless he has had some previous study of the great principles underlying these questions. Yet discourse of them he must, or be content with exercising less than his legitimate influence upon the community.

All this study cannot be mastered in a brief period, but he has before him a life-time of study, and may, if diligent, accomplish large things. An hour of serious reading daily for thirty years will give materials so ample as to provide a generous store of illustrations for all possible pulpit services.

Better than any definite information, these studies broaden and enrich the mind, which in the study of theology alone is apt to grow narrow and juiceless. They make us acquainted with life as it is, rather than with speculations upon it. They enable the minister to look out from his study windows for himself, and see what is passing in the great world. His sermons may lose a little in metaphysical acumen, but they will be vastly more interesting, as touching human interests in every direction.

IV.

ARRANGEMENT.

Much of the success of an extemporaneous sermon will depend on the care with which its several parts are arranged. The proper disposition of the arguments is as important as their invention. Whether for the ease of the speaker in delivering his sermon, or for the pleasure of the audience in listening, the distribution of the thoughts and their mutual connection are of utmost consequence. Such a sermon cannot be molluscous in structure; it must be vertebrate. One unifying thought should pervade every paragraph and be subtly referred to in every sentence. Professor Goodrich makes the remark in reference to Lord Erskine, that the great success of his forensic arguments was due to a "leading principle, early announced and closely adhered to, throughout the longest speech, and giving it a weight which detached thoughts, however splendid, could never have attained." The grand purpose of the sermon, clearly fixed in the mind of the preacher at the outset should never be forgotten, even for a moment, and should be made equally evident to the congregation. It seems to us wise to do this in the opening sentence, or at least in the first paragraph.

An exordium, of less or greater length, may be necessary in courts or senates to render the audience friendly, docile, and attentive; but in church all the previous exercises are properly the preacher's exordium. The hymns selected, the passages of scripture read, the prayers, if they are suitable to his purpose, will prepare the audience more effectively for the argument of the discourse, than any skill in the opening paragraphs can do. Whether by anticipating the tone of the sermon, or by contrast with it, a skillful preacher will make all the preliminary exercises contribute to his main design. Having done so, it is quite superfluous to have any elaborate exordium. The audience is attentive to the reading of the text, many having their Bibles open ready to turn to the passage. Having heard it, they are immediately curious to learn what the minister means to do with it. For there are many lessons that may be derived from any significant text of scripture. The words of Holy Writ are succulent, not to be exhausted by any single use. It is a good plan to gratify this very laudable curiosity by announcing, as clearly and concisely as possible, the purport of the discourse. The first sentence thus strikes the skillful key-note of the whole sermon. There are various ways of doing this. It may be by a direct statement of the preacher's purpose, as "I propose to speak to-day of such a clause;" or "My intention is to employ this text in the maintenance of such a proposition." It is preferable, however, generally, to let

the sentiment uttered be itself the proposition. Or it may, occasionally, be introduced by an anecdote, a parable, a simile, or even a prayer.

A good impression is produced if the speaker, after announcing some general proposition, proceeds at once to break it up into its parts. This not only enables the people to apprehend it more clearly, but gives the impression of movement; as if the preacher had much to say and did not care to linger on the portals of his subject. To introduce many thoughts only remotely pertinent to the theme, at the opening of a discourse, has been wittily compared to leaving one's heavy baggage in the office of a hotel because it was too large to carry to the room. Such baggage is an encumbrance rather than a help, both to a traveler and a speaker. An extempore speaker, particularly, must guard against the impression that he is dallying with his subject for the purpose of filling up the time, in the fear lest his material should not hold out the allotted half hour. This is best accomplished by a succinct and rapid statement at the outset of his principal thoughts. If they are weighty, the people will gladly have them recalled, by and by, for amplification and illustration. We do not mean that it is wise to state always, or often, at the beginning the outline of his sermon. As has been well said, it need not be like a Swiss cottage with the framework outside. But it should have a framework; and, as a well-built house strikes the eye in its completeness, before we enter to examine the

rooms in detail, so should a discourse give a general view, in compact and well-chosen thoughts, of its structure and design.

The extempore preacher does well to avoid a multitude of divisions and sub-divisions. They tend to confuse his mind and are hard to retain in the memory. Two or three general divisions of the subject and a few clustered thoughts under each are sufficient. The utmost care is necessary to avoid making these divisions artificial or different from the natural cleavage of the text. Each head must be an important and obvious segment of the subject, different from the rest. Only thus can it justify its existence and be kept separate from them in speaking.

A few main ideas, clearly stated and repeated in varying phrase until they make their impression, are better than many. If weighty, a large number of ideas will prove too much for the digestion of an audience; if insignificant, they are felt to be below the seriousness of a divine service. To select a few of the most important considerations relating to the subject, amplify and illustrate them, is the best method of treatment. Nor need there be any fear of too much repetition, within reasonable limits. A lawyer, it has been said, will be apt to repeat his main proposition nearly as many times as there are jurymen in the box, before he has succeeded in convincing them all. "*Idem haud iisdem verbis*," the same idea but in different words, is the proper rule. Any important thought, especially if at all novel in

itself or by its connections, cannot be grasped by the mind of the hearer from a single statement. It requires to be presented over and over again in phrases ingeniously varied, before a clear apprehension reaches the people of what it is the preacher would say. Even then the work is but half done, for the mere comprehension of a new idea is of comparatively little value. It needs to be made emphatic. It must make impression on the mind, as the engraver cuts his design, by repeated strokes, on the plate of steel or copper. To have any lasting effect, it must be embodied in illustrations, enforced by trope and metaphor, shown in practical relation to life, held up as a factor in history, emphasized by quotations from Holy Scripture.

All this demands time and space. Plainly, only a few ideas can be so presented in any one sermon. And we are not now speaking of the principal ideas, of which there should be but one or two, but of the subordinate topics employed in their elucidation. These should be weighty, well developed, and few in number. Combined and recombined in various ways, they give ample substance to the discourse, and furnish the audience with enough, but not too much, to carry away. It may be wittily objected, here, that few preachers are in danger of bringing too much thought before the audience. Not too much certainly; but they may bring too many thoughts. *Haud multa, sed multum*, not many things, but much, should be the principle in our preaching as in our studies.

There are, moreover, not many subordinate ideas, of first importance, closely connected with any single subject. If properly limited, as it should be, to a definite proposition, "God is love," "We are saved by faith," the illustrative thoughts immediately related to the theme, and of a far-reaching significance, will not ordinarily embarrass the speaker by their number. If he must have many sub-divisions, some of them will prove of secondary importance, and will add really nothing to the argument.

While there is no rule that controls the number of illustrations that may properly be employed, it is our opinion that one under each head is generally sufficient. If the illustration already used seems to fail of its purpose, or if the thought be particularly recondite, several illustrations may be introduced. But for all ordinary purposes, one good one is enough. Illustrations have been compared to windows that let in the light. We do not want to make the house all windows, lest there be no room for any thing else, solid wall or interior convenience. They naturally come at the close of a paragraph, and, as it were, clinch the nail, which the master of the assembly is driving in. An illustration, compacted into a metaphor will thus, at the close, impinge the thought with burning, dazzling force upon the mind. Dr. Bushnell's sermons, although they have few developed illustrations, have innumerable metaphors, embodying his thought with the vivid imaginativeness of a true poet. It will be

found, we think, that a favorite way with this most delightful preacher, was to condense the whole power of a paragraph into one fiery sentence at the end. Thus in the sermon, "Loving God is but letting God love us," he says, "Your prayers must fan your desires, waiting as porters at all the gates and windows of your feeling, to hold them open to God's day." And again, "You have nothing to do but to let God's love possess and fill you, which it assuredly will, even as it fills the great and wide sea of his infinite bosom." Or in the sermon, very pertinent to modern discussions, "A single trial better than many;" "The gold-washers of California, having passed their dirt once through the sluice, drop what they call the 'tailings' below; and sometimes they discover a very little gold in these, enough to pay for milling them over again. But the tailings of an old, bad life, which has yielded no gold on the first trial—who will go to work on them with any, least prospect of success?"

These are endings of different paragraphs, or near the end, and fashion their thought into a thunderbolt to project it irresistibly upon the mind. This precept, as is evident by our citation of Dr. Bushnell, is fully as applicable to written as to extempore sermons. But no speaker can neglect it safely, for it brings out the thought by a kind of natural climax, and presents it boldly to the attention of the congregation.

While arguing that the thought of a paragraph

should be so arranged as to be climactic in its impression, we venture to differ with the modern practice of making the whole sermon climactic, by bringing the utmost force to bear upon the termination. And our courage in this dissent is re-inforced by the authority of antiquity. Thus, we think most scholars would place the climax of Demosthenes' speech "On the Crown" at the oath, "By those who rushed on destruction at Marathon . . . gallant men!" and this is not nearly at the end. Our reason for putting the climax somewhere else than at the end, or near it, is that in the case of preaching people have come to expect it, and completely to discount its force. When the preacher grows fervid in his appeal, they begin to look for hat and gloves, as knowing the end to be near.

Now, in awakening the attention of an audience, or making an impression on their feelings, the element of surprise is of no insignificant advantage. As soon as any method of address becomes stereotyped, however excellent it may have been originally, it is shorn of half its power. When men anticipate an appeal, they brace themselves instinctively against it. To succeed, it must, as it were, take them in flank while they are not looking for it. If the culmination of the sermon, its strongest points, the most impressive applications, are regularly placed at the end, the people will very soon learn to expect them there and elude their power. In order to avoid this, it appears to be the best way to have no

settled order, but to change as much as possible the position of the climax. Variety is secured by this means, and better than variety, a greater impressiveness. Taken at unawares, men are touched before they had begun to suspect there was any likelihood of it.

The speaker will be allowed to digress occasionally from the direct line of his argument, provided he does not use this liberty too frequently, and the digression seems to be a natural one. But men are impatient of a wandering discourse, and nothing pleases them so much as for the preacher to stick to the point. It is well, therefore, to avoid the appearance of wandering by distinctly marking the fact that it is a digression. After an excursion into some interesting field of remark that grows out of the subject, indeed, but grows away from it, the speaker will check himself with the words, "To return to our theme," or something of similar import. This secures any doubtful listeners from mistaking the side-track for the main line, and keeps the principal argument distinctly before them.

Better than any digression, however, is the skill that can so deftly arrange the thoughts of the discourse as to allow the speaker to say whatever the subject has suggested to him directly, and without any seeming diversion. This can generally be done by a little pains, though not always. What would be a digression under one head, becomes a natural inference under another. Placed where it belongs,

the application will have a greatly increased efficacy. It will not appear to have been sought for, but to have come of itself.

The remark was made at the beginning of this chapter that an extempore sermon cannot be molluscous, but must be vertebrate in its structure; it may be advisable at this point to state more fully what was intended by the observation. It is, then, a noticeable quality of some styles of writing, that the thought flows on in a placid stream, without any breaking up into segments or divisions of any kind. This style is characterized by accretion, or by adding one thought after another as it happens to occur to the mind of the writer, without any very definite prevision of the end from the beginning. It is not lacking in adaptation to an essay, or to light sketches of any sort. It is often seen in written sermons, notably those of a meditative character. But it will not answer for an extemporaneous preacher. For one thing, it will be impossible for him to remember a mass of undigested and disconnected observations. The mind fails to retain them, for there is no interior coherence to bind together and fasten them in the memory; they are, so to speak, molluscous.

A spoken sermon must have a clear and definite plan underlying its entire organization. It must be regularly built around a central idea, as vertebrate animals around, or upon, a back-bone; and every division, paragraph, or sentence, bound to the rest

by a close articulation. Even though nothing of this interior connection should be revealed to the audience; to the mind of the speaker there must be definite, well-marked divisions all the way through. Each topic must be related to the one before, and to the following, by a close logical sequence. Each topic, moreover, must stand by itself, clearly marked in the mind. All the thoughts of the sermon, which bear upon that topic, should be clustered around it. It will have its own statement, proofs, illustrations, and possibly, applications; in short, be a little speech by itself, that might be taken apart from the rest and delivered independently.

When the introduction, each of the topics of argument or remark, and the conclusion, are thus definitely outlined in the mind; if also they are mutually related, so that each belongs exactly in the place assigned to it, and could not well come earlier and later in the sermon; the speaker will find that this logical arrangement, or vertebration, of his thought is a great assistance to his recollection. Nor does the benefit end with the speaker. What was easy for him to remember, will be much easier for the audience to carry away; a very desirable result, since it is to be feared that they get from many sermons only a very general impression of the desirableness of religion. If we may apply to a sermon, what was originally spoken of the church, the "whole body" of the discourse, "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," maketh in-

crease for the edifying of the body of Christ in love. The minute subdivisions of the old preachers, indeed, are not to be commended. The Puritan divines, with their numberless heads of remark, are not models for these latter days. But there is some difference between having too many articulations and none at all. Nor, as we said before, is it advisable that the junctures should be always announced ; it is only essential that they be there, giving a sinewy strength and backbone to the discourse.

It is possible, also, in this way, more easily to preserve the proper proportions of a sermon, for a ready means exists of measuring the length of any part, in comparison with the rest. The whole may be better balanced, and obtain that symmetry of treatment, which is the first rule of art.

It is not worth while to spend much time in refutation of objections, or demolition of the arguments of noted infidels. The people care very little about them, and often are first made aware of their existence by hearing them discussed in the pulpit. But, supposing it to be necessary to deal with objections, the advice of the ancient writers is good, namely, to put the " confutation " after the positive arguments. It is best, first to establish the truth, then, if need be, demolish the error that seeks to overthrow it. After the doctrine has been proved affirmatively, it is easier to deal with objections, and they may be disposed of, in a more summary manner.

It is, generally, desirable to sum up, at the close,

in brief and weighty words, the course of argument that has been traversed in the sermon. This may be done formally, by repetition of the several heads in their order; or rhetorically, by weaving them all into one long, cumulative sentence; or it may be that some striking anecdote, or brilliant comparison, will sufficiently embody and impress the principle of the sermon; or a pungent appeal may carry it home to the hearer. Every possible device must be resorted to, to prevent the appearance of sameness in the conclusion of successive sermons. Every variety of ending, in its turn, is the best.

The sermon thus composed of a few massive and well-forged links, each distinct yet closely connected, strikes upon the mind of the hearer, like a chain-shot, in one solid and resistless impression.

V.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

We have called the illustrations the windows of a discourse, openings by which light is admitted to the subject. More appropriately, we might call them wings of speech, sustaining and directing its flight. On them the thought flies to any elevation and easily maintains itself there. Any abstract truth is held painfully by the mind, but it has been said that man, civilized or savage, loves a trope. All the parables of our Lord imply a close resemblance between the world of matter and of spirit. "The kingdom of heaven is like" a farmer scattering seed, a woman making bread or sweeping a cottage, a merchant searching the market for pearls, a fisherman casting his net—like any commonest act of men. Spiritual truths easily throw themselves into the mold of daily experiences. Had we eyes to see it, an angel looks out from every bush, setting it on fire with divine truth.

The best part of our language was originally a metaphor. To "grasp" anything by the mind, was first suggested by grasping objects in the hand. An "eminent" man recalls the cliff that towers above its fellows. All poetry is based on the apt presenta-

tion of refined ideas in sensible images, giving to airy nothings a local habitation.

The oratory that succeeds best with the people, is of the kind that most abounds in concrete imagery. By whatever name it is called, trope, metaphor, proverb, parable, anecdote, illustration, according as it is brief and pithy, or drawn out in a more extended comparison; it is, essentially, the same poetic faculty of speech, which gives it wings to men's hearts and understandings. Mr. Choate is said to have remarked on a certain occasion, that nothing is too learned or profound for a popular audience, only it should always be expressed, not in abstract phrase, but in a concrete fashion; a fine metaphor, a sparkling truism, a stinging epithet, a familiar anecdote. It is then easily understood and remembered. Probably the metaphor, as being the compactest form of illustration, is the figure of speech in which the orator may most freely indulge. But, if we may judge by the practice of the ablest speakers, every variety of illustration may be used, as occasion demands.

If they served no other purpose, parables and extended comparisons are useful to relieve the attention of an audience. To listen to solid argument for half or three-quarters of an hour is, for men distracted by business cares through the week, almost an impossibility. They require to relax the tension every little while, and nothing serves better for this than a pleasing comparison. Lord Chatham was

accustomed to diminish the strain produced by his lofty and impassioned declamation, upon the minds of the noble lords, by eloquent reference to the "tapestry which adorns these walls," or to the remarkable "conflux of the Rhone and Saone," or by an apt quotation from some familiar classic. While not delaying the argument, but rather furthering it, they relieved the attention or caught again the attention which had momentarily wandered.

Moreover, nothing serves more to embellish a discourse than well-chosen comparisons. We may quote here the famous metaphor of Junius, in speaking of the king's dignity, "The feather that adorns the royal bird supports his flight," for it may equally be applied to a discourse, the illustrations of which are both wings and ornaments. A single word may sometimes carry to the hearer a whole train of subtle and grateful associations. It is redolent of a noble poem, or fraught with scientific suggestion, or fragrant with the incense of ages of prayer. A cultivated audience relishes fresh allusion to the literature of the day, showing the preacher to be up with the times. A devout hearer is refreshed by some deft introduction of a scriptural quotation. The common people gladly hear a simile that recalls the homely scenes of daily life. Properly guarded against too great familiarity, these last are most effective with the majority of men.

What is more easily comprehended or more universally popular, than the plain metaphors, and

homely comparisons of the *Pilgrim's Progress*? What is more universal in its appeal to all ages and nations than the poetry of Homer; which is full of the bleating of sheep and the lowing of kine, screaming cranes and clustering bees, laborers binding sheaves, and wood-cutters felling trees, women at the loom, girls preparing the bath, Nausicaa at the laundry, Ulysses making a raft? It is of universal interest, because it appeals to universal experience.

Thus the most fertile source of illustrations, for both embellishment and instruction, and the one always most interesting to any audience, is from the everyday experiences of ordinary life. It is this field which offers such inexhaustible stores to the novelist, and renders the fiction of the present day so widely attractive. The people never tire of what reminds them of home or business. It is, also, precisely in this range of experiences that the moral problems arise with which the preacher has to deal, and upon which he needs to throw the clearest light. Every accurately drawn picture of human beings, buying, selling, toiling, suffering, in love, in temptation, in sickness, on the bed of death, is interesting in itself, and illumines some of the manifold relations of the soul to God, or to humanity.

While avoiding anything trivial or coarse, the preacher need not anxiously strive to keep a sustained flight of eloquence, or of brilliant illustrations all through his discourse. It is better for a little plainness now and then. No matter if Homer does

nod occasionally. Too great richness of a sermon, even when the speaker's genius enables him to attain it, cloys the mind like a too-dainty repast. Plain food is better both for body and mind, and is relished longer. Cloth of gold may be admired in a show, but it would be cumbersome to wear. Plain thoughts, plainly expressed in the language of the people, illustrated by homely comparisons, and applied to daily needs, are most fitted for edification. Practical men are apt to say of any sentiment of unusual grandeur, "That is all very fine, but what of it?" But if it presently appear as applicable to the ordinary business of life, they welcome it. The overruling Providence of God for example, guiding the nations, is a noble subject of contemplation, but somewhat too remote for immediate impression; the same Providence helping solve the query, what shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewith shall we be clothed, is of personal interest to every hearer.

We think it is a mistake to draw comparisons very frequently, except before a very cultivated congregation, from foreign travel, or from profound scientific investigations; for the reason that they do not really illustrate the sermon, as the people are already more familiar with the thought than with the object it is compared to. Occasionally they may be introduced for ornament or dignity, but nothing can really illustrate a point, unless it is better known than the point itself. They seem, moreover, to argue how learned a man the preacher is, or how widely

he has traveled, and present to the audience the man rather than his theme. The time when he was in Wittemberg, looking for the door where the theses were nailed, or the hot day on which he climbed the Pyramids, or his emotions among the Himalayas, may be interesting to himself, but his congregation care very little about them.

Among books, of course, the best and most fertile source of illustrations for the preacher is the Bible. The more perfectly he remembers every part of it, the more amply is he furnished with inexhaustible stores of appropriate comparisons. People never tire of them. They readily comprehend them, for the Bible is the people's classic. They will not be impatient of any number of scriptural instances, for they are edifying and devotional in themselves, as well as adapted to illumine the subject under discussion. If the preacher, for example, is speaking of prayer, what better illustrations of its universality, or its power, than Abraham praying for Sodom, Elijah against the priests of Baal, or Christ retiring to the mountain to refresh His spirit by its serene uplifting?

Next to the Bible, the extempore preacher will find his account in acquaintance with hymnology and the best of popular poetry. An apt verse of some old hymn suitably introduced will make a very tender or a very solemn impression. One of the easiest and most affluent extemporaneous speakers, to whom it has been our fortune to listen, has in this

way given striking effect to some of his discourses. The words of a familiar hymn point the sharpened arrows which the preacher seeks to drive home upon the conscience.

For dignity of sentiment and splendor of diction, there is none like Milton. Some of the noblest passages in the oratory of Burke are evidently derived from the Paradise Lost. Other great orators have sought inspiration in the same source. The first book, or the sixth, describing the war in heaven between the loyal and the fallen angels, are majestic sources of pulpit imagery. To peruse them again and again, marking the lines which most attract our attention, will give material for illustration of the most impressive kind.

Whittier and Longfellow have given the world many exquisite statements of spiritual and ethical truth that should not be neglected. What better image of the effects of meditation at the evening twilight than the words—

> "And the night shall be filled with music,
> And the cares that infest the day
> Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
> And as silently steal away !"

The right employment of anecdote is of incalculable advantage to one who would attain the honors of a popular speaker. One of the most brilliant living preachers, whose name has become almost a synonym for elegant extemporaneous speech, is quite famous in respect of the number and aptness of the

anecdotes which he can bring to a festive occasion. They are always in order when the speaker's object is to put an audience in good humor, or to fill up the allotted time with remarks that shall not be burdensome from their weight. After-dinner speeches, festivals commemorating the history of a town or a church, greetings to new ministers, commencements and gatherings of alumni, naturally call for anecdotes respecting their founders and ancestry, and allow an almost unlimited range of story-telling that may possibly be connected with the occasion by the slenderest of ties. But this mode of illustration must be sparingly employed, if at all, in the graver discourse of the pulpit. If admitted, the circumstance narrated should be of a serious or pathetic kind, and be clearly apposite. Anecdotes of a humorous cast detract from dignity and impressiveness more than they can possibly add in piquancy. Accounts of our own conversion, or of remarkable conversions we have witnessed, have high warrant for pulpit use; they are more serviceable, however, to "pilgrims of a night," like evangelists or itinerants, than to settled pastors, because once told their effectiveness is gone for that community.

One of the best fields for the extemporaneous preacher, and also not overworked in this generation, is in the history of the church and the biography of God's people. Our historic sense has but recently begun to be cultivated, in connection with religion. For a long time Christian people have been disposed

to look upon the Gospel as simply an individual affair. If they read the Bible and obeyed its precepts they knew all they cared to know of the power of Christianity. But the Church is becoming conscious of the fact that it cannot properly understand the Bible, or justly appreciate even its ethical precepts, until they are seen in the light of that grand Christian movement which has illuminated and elevated the centuries The Gospel is more highly venerated as it is seen confronting kings and molding nations to a new life. Its mighty victories over ages of darkness are a triumphant vindication of its divine origin. The biographies of good men and saintly women of every nationality and of every century are fertile of instruction and encouragement. The history of the Reformation has recently been brought vividly before the Protestant world in connection with the four-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Luther. It has yielded an abundant store of the richest materials for illustrating and enforcing the doctrine of justification by faith. But Luther was not the sole reformer, nor was the sixteenth century the only one fraught with triumphs of grace. The fourth century was one of the most brilliant epochs in the history of the church, and has been freshly described in the writings of Dean Stanley. The great names of Constantine and Helena, of Athanasius, Hosius, and Jerome suggest endless illustrations of the conquest of Christianity over paganism.

In more recent times the great movement begun by Whitefield and the Wesleys is an instructive lesson of what may be done by men of faith. The preacher may not wisely omit the marvelous revivals of the first half of this century. Great evangelists, like Nettleton and Finney, were captains of the Lord's Host in many a hard-fought campaign; their lives, doctrines, and the scenes of grace in which they bore a part, will, if skillfully portrayed, quicken the pulse of any congregation.

The great missionary enterprises of the day should be closely studied by every minister. More than any other study, they are an inspiring commentary on the Book of Acts. They show the doctrines of Christ in conflict with the same foes as in Apostolic times, casting down idols, and bringing the heathen into subjection to the cross. They serve to stimulate faith and hope. They easily swell our discourses with numerous examples of heroic endurance, childlike piety, ardent zeal. It is true, that descriptions of missionary life and its glorious results, have become so common, that our congregations begin to be a little tired of them, so that they must be employed with some prudence. But once or twice a year, at the missionary collections, or now and then in a course of sermons on missions, they may be adverted to with excellent effect.

The Hebrew prophets and the Psalms, as well as the parables of Christ, have taught the Christian world to love Nature, in her every aspect, and to

look upon her as an exhaustless source of illustration for the truths of religion. Abundant stores of imagery may be drawn from the prophetic writings, or may be suggested by their methods. That God is a strong tower of defense, a bulwark against our foes, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, like the hills round about Jerusalem; that wind and storm, fire and snow, the flood, the harvest, the famine or the locust, are instruments of his august Providence; that blooming deserts and renovated highways, desolate cities rebuilt, wild animals tamed, are appropriate emblems of the moral renovation of mankind; are thoughts so familiar to us as to have almost ceased to be figures of speech. For they seem to be plain statements of fact.

The world of nature is teeming with illustrations of this sort, and the preacher has sacred authority for using them as freely as he chooses. What more exquisite picture, than in Isaiah, where he compares Israel to a vineyard in a very fruitful hill, fenced about, carefully tended, but bringing forth only wild grapes, and destined to be destroyed for its unfruitfulness! And Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, very dry, has been the appropriate illustration of how many sermons!

While avoiding recondite scientific theories, the preacher will find a vast supply of entertaining and instructive illustrations in the wonders revealed by modern science. Behold what marvels God hath wrought in the mysterious laboratories of nature,

where were fashioned the costly gems, the gold-bearing quartz, the unexhausted beds of coal, the oil out of the rocks! See how man is fulfilling the promise that he shall have dominion over the world, because he is the son of God, in the magic use of steam, electricity, the actinic solar ray! The heart throbs with exultation at each new discovery. The preacher can always arouse the interest of the most sluggish, by a simple description of some new enginery of human progress, a telephone, an electric lamp, a surgical appliance for alleviating pain. These are facile symbols of spiritual truth, and so rapid is the course of invention, that new means of comparison are always arising.

Some clergymen, very unwisely, make frequent reference to science and to scientific men, in an antagonistic, or a sarcastic, manner; as if there were some irreconcilable difference between science and religion, or as if scientists as a body were opposed to religious truth. This is altogether uncalled for. Religion and science are but the first and second volumes of the Divine revelation. God has revealed himself to men both by his word and his works. If men have been unable to reconcile the two revelations, in any particular, it is merely because they have not yet read them with absolute correctness. Such disparaging allusions to science, in the pulpit, arise from a jealousy for religion, which may be sincere, but is greatly mistaken. The trophies of science are among the best illustrations of the power

and meaning of religious truth, to be found anywhere.

It will be seen from the various sources already mentioned that a speaker who is well informed, and whose mind is on the alert for sensible images of invisible things, will be rather embarrassed by their abundance, than feel any deficiency. In fact, he will find more than he can possibly use, and his labor will be in selection rather than in seeking for them. He will reject many in the construction of every sermon, and choose the few that best illumine his thought. It is well to remember also, in this connection, that it is quite possible to have too many illustrations, as was before remarked. Too much play of fancy, too great affluence of imagery, are incompatible with the stern and profound earnestness which should characterize the preacher. The sword may be of Damascus steel, but there will be few ornaments engraved on the blade, if it is really intended for the battle.

Our audiences, it is true, are a little sated with preaching, and often require more embellishment in the sermon than is warranted by good taste, or by the highest effectiveness. The preacher, who must endeavor to secure a hearing by all innocent devices, will be constrained to yield a little to the popular taste for fine figures and eloquent descriptions; but he will seek constantly to train his congregation to a simpler and severer ideal of preaching. The object of it is to convert men, not merely to please them;

any ornament that in the least mars the design, or diverts attention from it, is meretricious. Illustrations are for clearer comprehension, and for enforcing the truth. As such they are useful and may be unhesitatingly employed. But when they are introduced merely for ornament, or as an exercise of ingenuity, or a display of learning, good taste, no less than earnest piety, condemns them.

VI.

STYLE.

There is in English, as in all highly developed languages, a very sensible difference between the style in favor among the learned, and that usually employed in common life. The one abounds in inversions, lengthened periods, with subordinate and qualifying clauses, and a technical terminology. Its roots are largely in the Latin, partially from the Greek. To cite extreme instances: Dr. Johnson used a learned style, which Macaulay wittily terms Johnsonese; on the other hand, De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe* is a master-piece of the popular, or Saxon, style. It need hardly be said that the latter is the more appropriate for the speaker.

Among the great orators of the century Daniel Webster is most noted for his plain, manly, and popular English. If it be the preacher's purpose to be understood, rather than applauded, he will always give preference to the direct, simple, and energetic idioms of what we will venture to call the Websterian style. They are equally acceptable to the learned and unlearned. They may be the vehicle of plain fact or of majestic argument. If St. Paul

would rather speak in church "five words with his understanding, that by his voice he might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue," it certainly is desirable to exclude from our pulpits a multitude of terms which often find admission. They may possibly be an accurate expression of the preacher's ideas, but convey no meaning to one-half of the congregation. Luther once said he preached with no reference to the learned doctors and professors in his church, of whom there might be forty, and gave all his attention to edifying the people, of whom there were two thousand.

Dr. Wayland, in his *Letters on the Ministry of the Gospel*, is quite explicit on this point. "I fear that the tendency of the pulpit is to a style which, in a great measure, fails to accomplish the purpose for which it is intended. . . . . The tendency of habitually using written preparations is to the formation of a written instead of a spoken style; to cultivate a habit of writing for the press instead of uttering our thoughts to an audience. It is not the language of ordinary thought or ordinary conversation, and it is as if we addressed them in a foreign tongue, which they only imperfectly understand."

To this agree the ancient canons of eloquence. Thus Aristotle says (Rhet. 3, 10–12): "The receiving information with ease is naturally pleasing to all; and words are significant of something, so that all those words whatsoever which produce knowledge in the mind are most pleasing. Now the foreign ex-

pressions are unintelligible, and words of common use we already understand. But the metaphor, in the highest degree, produces this effect. The style, then, and the arguments which render the act of information rapid, are elegant."

The whole training of a liberally-educated minister is away from the plain idioms of common life. His study of the classics has imbued him with admiration for the noble words and resounding periods of those finished tongues. His researches in scientific theology have supplied a diction bristling with the phrases of the schools. The poets have ministered to the elegance of his speech, retaining many words and idioms not often heard in conversation. In the Scriptures, along with much plain Saxon, there is combined a large number of archaic idioms and obsolescent words. All this learned and cultivated language has been the vehicle of his thoughts for many years. His written compositions and trial sermons were successful, or otherwise, according as they dealt in the high themes of philosophy, and were clothed in a classic elegance of diction.

To a certain extent this is as it should be. The preacher is sent to the learned and refined, as well as to others, and should be prepared to address them in the style to which they are accustomed, else they will vote him rude and uncultivated. If it should be his fortune to address this class all through his ministry we should counsel him to write and read every word he utters from the pulpit. Only so can

he satisfy the critical accuracy of cultivated ears and the exactions which they inevitably impose upon the minister. But this class, although very influential in the church, is not the most numerous, nor by any means the class which most needs to be considered by a preacher who is anxious to do all that he can for Christ. There are the little ones of every flock; there are the active business men, who have not been much to school, but were educated by affairs; there are, it is to be hoped, the poor, needing the consolations of the Gospel. There are also a multitude of young men, who may understand, possibly, a learned diction but are not interested in it nor moved by it. These classes will be best reached and oftenest benefited by "their own tongue, wherein they were born;" the plain vernacular of common life.

Of course, this may be employed in a written sermon, but it will most easily and naturally flow from the lips of one who is speaking, as men everywhere speak to men, without previous elaboration by the pen. It is evident that the solemnities of public service require great caution in avoiding trite or vulgar expressions, any approximation to slang, anything offensive to nice ears. This is entirely possible while the style remains closely adherent to the speech of the people. The language of Bryant's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, for example, is almost purely Saxon, and yet no man was more fastidious than he in the use of words. These translations, therefore, are fine specimens of a plain yet elegant style, and a repeated perusal of them would be of no little advantage.

The extemporeanous speaker needs to have full command of a flexible and varied grammatical structure. In this respect the English language offers fewer difficulties than some others, as, for example, the French, which, as M. Bautain informs us in his *Art of Extemporaneous Speaking*, allows of only one class of terminations for its periods. In English the sentence may be direct or inverted, the adjective before or after the noun, subordinate clauses may be introduced without confusion, the period end with a long or short word, as chance may dictate. One who has learned the capacities of our language and is able to employ them with facility, need seldom be at a loss for the means of extricating himself from any grammatical difficulty. Although a speaker cannot pause as a writer does to consider or recast his sentences, by some painstaking effort he will be able to fashion them on the instant with sufficient accuracy.

But what class of studies will conduce most readily to this very desirable result? How can a speaker so train himself as to have no fears in this respect, but be able to speak, if necessary, hour after hour, without one ill-constructed period or any hesitation for an appropriate phrase? Many public men have had this facility, as, for example, William Pitt. Now, the means which were employed by him in gaining his extraordinary command over the resources of his native tongue, are detailed by Professor Goodrich in a most instructive chapter of the *British*

Eloquence. Mr. Pitt was a close student of the classics and had read them all before entering Parliament. "His mode of translating the classics to his tutor was a peculiar one. He did not construe an author in the ordinary way, but after reading a passage of some length in the original he turned it at once into regular English sentences, aiming to give the ideas with great exactness and to express himself at the same time with idiomatic accuracy and ease. Such a course was admirably adapted to the formation of an English style, distinguished at once for copiousness, force, and elegance. To this early training Mr. Pitt always ascribed his extraordinary command of language."

Lord Coleridge, in a recent address to American students, advocated the same means of discipline. Whatever else the classics may do, or fail to do, for the student, they will, if rightly used, make him a proficient in the use of English undefiled. Every paragraph rendered is a short extempore speech. Every word "overset," as the Germans say, into his native speech is a lesson in synonyms and exact meanings. This practice, continued for a few minutes every day, will do more to give a perfect command both of the grammatical construction of the language and its individual words than any other means, for it concentrates attention upon the very point most imperative to a speaker, so far as expression is concerned, namely, a facility so complete as to be unconscious of stating all possible ideas in exact and polished periods.

But a hard-working parish clergyman may object here that he has forgotten his classics, or has no time for them. This is true very likely; but at least every preacher must be acquainted with the Greek Testament. If, then, he will make a daily resolution not only to understand it, but to turn a few verses off-hand into the choicest English he is master of, he will not only gain a better comprehension of its inestimable truths, but will be able to preach them with facility and force.

All the authorities recommend writing, also, habitual and copious, as productive of finished speech. It can never be intermitted by a speaker who would cultivate all the possibilities of language. But if a young preacher accepts the advice indicated in our first chapter, to write in full one-half of his sermons, he will have done, before his life is ended, writing enough to satisfy the most exacting conscience. And he will have this advantage over one who writes all of his sermons, be they many or few, that he has more time and energy for writing with care. Hasty and slipshod composition is a harm rather than a benefit to style. To write always as well as we can is the road to ultimate improvement. Yet, undue anxiety on this point is a useless burden. To a youth who lamented that he could not satify himself with his composition Florus said, "Do you wish to write better than you can?" Quintilian, relating the incident, recommends to write slowly at first, and as well as possible; facility, he says, will come with practice.

For fluency and copiousness of speech a great orator has recommended a wide reading of history. This has already been spoken of as a most valuable source of illustrations, and it is equally useful in regard of the point we are now considering. The reason is that if there are in the mind a large number of historical facts and instances pertinent to the discussion of moral truth, the words in which to express them can never be far to seek. Moreover, history is largely made up of the portraits of remarkable men and women, and of their deeds for good or evil on the great stage of the world. Their personal characteristics, secret springs of action, and all the arguments on either side which are elicited by changes in government and society, are clearly unfolded by the best historians. The mind becomes, as it were, saturated with nice discriminations of character and conduct. Its thoughts, for days together, are upon approval or condemnation of the mighty men who have made the ages re-echo with their achievements. The footsteps of the Lord, moving over the troubled waters of human affairs, and making them quiet with a great calm, are evident to the eye of faith. Thus the mind is filled with images of moral and religious truth, acted on a heroic scale and through periods long enough to show the ultimate issues. The intellect of the preacher is stimulated by great thoughts and illustrious actions. It perceives fresh views and has a greater amplitude of emotions. In this way history becomes a help to

fertility of thought and that copiousness which does not consist of an abundance of words merely, but in abundance of sentiments appropriately expressed.

There are many hours in which the most energetic man is incapable of severe study. His mind is weary. It can produce nothing. It cannot even attend to serious reading. But it may be refreshed by works of travel, biography, and general literature. We would, however, caution the extempore preacher to avoid that large class of popular writings, which have a wide circulation because of low dialect and profane jests. Apart from any question of morals, he must guard his speech against any vulgarity. If the latter is never in his mind, it will not be on his tongue. In this connection, also, it is wise to remember the precept of Dr. Johnson, to habitually employ the best language, for a habit of elegant speech on all ordinary occasions is a great assistance to elegance in public.

A diction studiously plain and practical may be, occasionally, ornamented with excellent effect by rare or antique words, whether drawn from the Bible, or from the early poets. If only used in such a connection that they can be readily understood, the humblest audience is pleased to hear them. Scientific terminology may, also, be employed, but it is very essential that it be used with precision, or some critical hearer will presently remind the preacher of the vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself.

There is a danger besetting all extempore speak-

ers, and to be anxiously avoided: of indulging too freely in a declamatory style. The speaker is always under a considerable degree of excitement, and in this condition it is easy to be too emphatic, to make sweeping charges against denominations or classes of men, to state general truths without limitation, utter frequent apostrophes, use startling metaphors, or to speak in a high monotone and as loudly as possible. These are faults to be shunned with the greatest care. They distress refined hearers. They add nothing to the impressiveness of the sermon, but rather detract from it. A calm, unexcited style is always preferable. More than the whirlwind or the thunder, it is the still, small voice that reaches the heart. Probably the best means of avoiding this fault is to have a variety of clearly-defined points in the discourse. They make natural breaks in the delivery. One is finished before another is taken up. Should the preacher accidentally reach too great a momentum in the development of one point, and become excited to a declamatory fervor, he is checked and brought to his feet again by the necessity of stopping to explain and argue the next one. A weighty and argumentative discourse is seldom declamatory. Diligent preparation of separate topics prevents soaring on the pinions of excited rhapsody.

An analogous and equally grave defect is: exuberance of language, combined with paucity of sentiments. This is a strong temptation to one who

must speak, when the hour arrives, whether he wishes or not; but making remarks to "fill up the time" is an abomination that demands abatement, in the prayer-meeting or in the pulpit. St. Augustine speaks of certain heretical teachers of his day, who gracefully presented a golden cup with nothing in it. This is not a fault of heretics only. Among the orthodox, one may find men who have a marvelous gift of words, and, seemingly, little else. It is easy for them to arise, anywhere, and pour forth a flood of pious expressions, not unpleasing to hear; but if one stops to analyze them, there is seen to be little but the words. There is behind them no considerate thought, or exact information, or even genuine feeling. It is this class of preachers who have done much to bring the art of extemporaneous speaking into contempt. Practical men are impatient of a deluge of words. They would rather listen to a halting speaker who gives them the facts, than to the most graceful speaker who does not. If the preacher never speaks without having something useful to communicate, and if, knowing that he must speak, he is careful to prepare a sufficient body of thought, there will be little danger of empty loquacity.

The Spanish proverb, contemptuously describing a prolix writer, says: "He leaves no ink in his inkstand." Of a verbose speaker, we might similarly say: "He leaves no words in his vocabulary."

Probably no more concise or useful precept for

avoiding faults of this sort can be found than is contained in the mediæval saying:

"*Qui bene vult fari, debet bene præmeditari:*" who would speak well, should well premeditate. Protracted meditation of the subject not only supplies an affluence of ideas, but clothes them in fit words which rise duly and unsought to the lips as the speech progresses.

As an aid to the forming of an effective, popular style, it is of undoubted service to hear as many as possible of the best orators. To imitate others is natural, and unconsciously we may catch something of their tone or manner. Nor should a preacher confine himself to hearing those of his own profession. It will benefit him to listen to a wide range of oratory. Lecturers, political speakers, able lawyers addressing the jury, debates in legislatures and in Congress, conventions of bankers, and meetings for the advancement of science, constantly recurring in our wide-awake country, are invaluable helps to one who would learn the art of extempore speech. The student finds that there are many different ways of speaking, equally effective. He sees that very distinguished men make mistakes, and hesitate in their speech, and concludes that he need not be crushed by his own deficiencies. The most perfect orators will secure his admiration, and inspire an ardor to equal them. The discussion of a variety of great interests gives breadth and vigor to his thinking. For these reasons, all good speakers are to be heard as often as circumstances permit.

Among the practical precepts for cultivating a popular style of speech, there is none more within the province of a minister, than that which urges him to hold frequent conversations with men, on serious subjects. Says Lord Bacon, "Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man." Now he who is a recluse, shut up among his books all the week, will hardly find it easy to address the people "without book" on Sunday. He may be a "full man" and an "exact man," but will be very far from being a "ready man." On the other hand, if he has seen more or less of his fellow-men through the week, and conversed with them freely and seriously, his mind has been all along in the precise attitude of public speaking, and he is practising every day what he must do on Sunday.

And we feel no hesitation in urging upon every clergyman this habit of free and constant conversation on religious themes, because that is what is also required by a proper performance of parish duty. Every visit to a parishioner affords an opportunity of speaking words fraught with spiritual advice or consolation. By the bedside of the sick or dying, all his resources of faith and hope will be frequently demanded. Business men often need the clearing up of some perplexed question of moral or social duty, as of Sunday laws, or temperance legislation, or dealing with paupers. Little children welcome the kindly and sympathetic words of an

admired pastor. Thus, in the direct line of ordinary clerical duty there is ample scope and verge for the practice of that ready and apposite address, which leads men gladly into the presence of their God, and renders the public service of the Sabbath both a delight and an edification. And it will have none the less effect in the pulpit, but rather more, if what he says from the holy desk matches what he has already said at their homes during the week.

VII.

MEMORY.

To one unfamiliar with the methods by which a trained speaker holds the substance of his speech in his memory, and keeps it so fresh as to be ready for use on the instant, the feat seems difficult or well-nigh impossible. But the memory is capable of surprising cultivation. While there is a great difference between men in regard to this faculty, any intelligent person can preserve a fresh remembrance of a far greater number of things than would at first be supposed. Two conditions are necessary, firstly, interest in the matter; secondly, familiarity with it.

No one can remember the things that do not engage his attention. He surveys them with a listless indifference, which results in no impression on the mind. Strange and unfamiliar objects also are hard to recall, if numerous, because the intellect cannot classify them with sufficient rapidity. But what is of great interest to any one and also perfectly familiar in its general outline can always be remembered with ease, however multiplied the details may be. The postman carries hundreds of names in his recollection, and picks out the mail belonging to his district as rapidly as he can sort it. The clerk of a

large store remembers the location of his goods, their quality and prices; the physician a multitude of prescriptions; the lawyer a wide range of precedents. Each remembers that which most interests him and is most familiar from constant repetition.

Mrs. Oliphant, in a recent paper on the characteristics of Queen Victoria, affirms that the Queen, with royal courtesy, never forgets any one that has been presented to her.

Lord Macaulay tells, in one of his letters, of his habit of repeating from memory large portions of Paradise Lost, both as an exercise of the faculty and by way of passing the time. Once, on a journey to Dublin, across the channel, feeling indisposed to sleep, he sat upon the deck of the steamer and repeated for diversion a large portion of it, ending the eighth book as he saw the lights of Dublin harbor. These are cited as examples of prodigious memory, cultivated in particular directions. It is not claimed that they are easy of imitation, but they prove to what an amazing extent this faculty can be strengthened, if suitable care is given to its improvement.

The memory is capacious of that which has once become familiar. It has pigeon-holes, so to speak, already prepared, in which may be stored new facts or thoughts, under their respective categories. In virtue of this principle an extemporaneous speaker, after a while, finds that there is no difficulty whatever in remembering anything he has decided to say. At first there may be some trouble, as in all begin-

nings, but the trouble diminishes with practice, until it finally disappears, and the memory acts spontaneously, almost unconsciously. He is, presumably, speaking of themes which intensely interest him. They have been the themes of study, meditation, and prayer for years, in the seminary, and in his pastorate. His reading converges upon them. He has written much on every topic likely to be treated in the pulpit. He has recast it in his mind many times, stated and illustrated it in every conceivable way; has discussed it in long walks with his fellow-students, and debated it among his brother ministers. The substance of the Gospel becomes in this way as familiar to a minister as the reports of celebrated cases are to a lawyer, or the symptoms of diseases to a physician. Presently, all these facts, thoughts, texts, arguments will begin to fall into their proper classification in his mind. Provided his thinking be close, his ideas definite, his information precise, the memory will become a vast magazine of thoughts, each labeled and put in its appropriate niche. If only the magazine is kept full by persistent and well-directed study, there need be no fear of a deficiency at any particular time.

In addition to this general furnishing of the memory, which, indeed, any minister requires before he can even write a sermon with ease, the special requirements of extempore speaking will soon train the faculty to a degree which could not have been believed without the trial. The speaker is compelled to exercise his memory, and it grows strong by use.

Suppose now that he sets about to prepare a new sermon. It will be on a theme he has often handled, but he intends to weave certain novel features into the present treatment, use some new illustrations, make a few fresh applications of it. Having fixed the novel features in his memory, by conning them, as one would learn a lesson at school, so firmly that no accident can dislodge them, or, if there be any doubt, having notes to be used in case of necessity; under each division he places in his mind or on the brief the argument of that head, certain facts to be stated, certain metaphors to be employed.

At first, the preacher will find that some of these subordinate points escape him. The remedy is to provide many more than he can use, as the sportsman, for unforeseen emergencies, carries many more cartridges than he actually needs. After a while he will be so trained to recollect his points that seldom will any important thought elude him. But if such a thing should happen, he will not waste any time in the effort to recall it, but will invent another to take its place. Public speaking is partly from memory, partly from immediate invention, the speaker himself can hardly tell which; for both memory and invention assist in the formation of every paragraph.

Quintilian recommends a little note-book containing memorabilia, to be held in the hand by any speaker who lacks confidence in his memory. It can easily be referred to should occasion demand, but the

less dependence there is placed upon it the more tenacious the memory will become. Still there are many things which are best read from notes. We once heard Charles Sumner deliver an eloquent oration before a crowded assembly. He spoke from a full mind, had probably written the speech, but did not appear to be reciting it, but rather to be speaking as the moment prompted. He had frequent occasion to quote public documents, and the speeches of other statesmen, or matters of the kind, and when the time came drew out a little book, with newspaper cuttings pasted in, and turning to the place, read what he wished. Then putting away the book, he continued his speech. The pause made in consulting his notes was not, by any means, ungrateful to the audience. The preacher can introduce quotations of some length, scriptural passages, statistical reports, in a similar way. To attempt to remember them involves labor, and, besides, gives an appearance of artificiality; for all know that such things would have to be learned before they could be repeated.

It is poor policy to attempt to preserve in the memory the exact words of a discourse. It requires a painful effort, and, especially, it confines attention to minutiae, when the mind should be expending its force upon the principal ideas. A few words, accidentally dropped, will disarrange the whole sermon. How difficult it is to learn any composition word for word, will be appreciated by any one who tries

to commit to memory even a short psalm. Some men have claimed, it is true, to be able to repeat a sermon, after two or three readings, but, if so, their memory was an exceptional one. And we are inclined, respectfully, to differ with them, as to the fact of their repeating the exact words. A careful observer who should have the manuscript in his hand, and follow the delivery, would find, we think, many discrepancies in the text. There might be a general correspondence between the written and spoken discourses, but it is very unlikely that they would agree exactly, even for a single paragraph. That is, having written out his sermon, he proceeds to extemporize another on the same subject; which, as we have seen in the second chapter, is the method recommended by Dr. John Hall. An extempore sermon, based upon a written one, ought to be a very good one.

It will be easier, however, to remember the substance of what has been meditated, than of what has been written, for the reason that, in meditating, one goes over the subject more frequently, and also remembers it by succession of ideas, rather than words. Ideas, well-linked, draw each other, like a chain or a net; words are a heap of leaves, easy to collect, hard to retain.

The subject we are considering is discussed by Fenelon, in an interesting passage of his dialogues on oratory. Although the general practice among the great preachers of his day was to write their

sermons and commit them to memory, he argues against it, on various grounds. His chosen method was to possess himself fully with his subject, and then speak upon it in a free, bold way, without care for elaboration of the language.

There is a great advantage, so far as memory is concerned, in having several fully developed illustrations in the sermon. They form a sensible image of the thought, and are easily retained by the imaginative faculty, and recall the ideas they are intended to illustrate. What we see, says Horace, is more easily remembered than what we hear. Similarly, what is clearly presented to the mental retina by a metaphor or comparison, remains more vivid than any abstract proposition. If the discourse should be made on this account more figurative, more replete with imagery, than a written one usually is, it is a change in the right direction. What is easy for the preacher to remember is likely, also, to be more easily remembered by his audience. It will be found on trial, we think, that people are more apt to remember the striking illustrations, than any other parts of the sermon. Facts also of an interesting nature, anecdotes, or special applications of the subject are easy to recall, for the same reason, namely, that they are a kind of concrete embodiment of the thought. They define it and bring it vividly before the mind. The proposition and arguments connected with them by association of ideas, will recur to the memory, even after years of latency.

Descriptions of natural scenery are, also, easily remembered, if the speaker has in mind a lively image of the scene he describes. The scriptural narratives afford a similar facility, in that the pictures presented are simple, well-defined, and familiar in their general outline, from our earliest recollection.

In addition to the special qualities of the discourse, which make it easy of remembrance, there are general preparations, of great use in enabling the preacher to remember all discourses. Everything which renders our knowledge, of whatever kind, more definite and compact, is an assistance towards its remembrance. This should be, especially, kept in mind, in our methods of studying the Bible. The scriptures are the preacher's arsenal. He should be perfectly familiar with his weapons, and the place where they are kept.

It is said of a certain clergyman that, in preparation for his ministry, he committed to memory, in the course of two or three years, the entire Greek Testament, distributing all the principal texts to their appropriate topics, in his mind; so that, if at any time he desired to speak on any one of them, the passages bearing upon it all recurred to him at once. It is similarly told of one of the fathers that during his retirement among the monks, before he began to preach, he accomplished the almost incredible task of committing the whole Bible to memory, so that all the principal parts of it were ready for use whenever, in the pulpit, he had need of them.

While such amazing feats of memory are somewhat too heroic for ordinary ministers, it is easy to perceive what benefit accrues from this kind of acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. To have a large number of proof texts, illustrative instances, and striking statements of each great doctrine, clearly and methodically arranged in the mind, and familiarized by frequent revision, is a capital preparation for preaching extemporaneously upon them.

The seminary note-book can be utilized for this purpose, if it is, as it should be, filled with a careful summary of all the principal doctrines, as the professor has gone through them in the class. In his lectures the doctrines of Christianity have been stated clearly, defined and limited, all the arguments presented for and against, objections answered, proof-texts adduced, false theories exploded, and the history of them examined. A diligent student will not only have this information carefully written out and preserved in his note-book, but will review it often, adding to it notes of texts or commentaries; modifying, perhaps, as he grows older, some of the ideas which he may have apprehended too crudely at the first. This careful revision of points once learned, fixes them firmly in the memory. Whatever can be said on any given doctrine is already in substance, present in the mind. There may be constant variation in the statement, but the great principle is fastened in the recollection for all time. It becomes in Scripture phrase, one of the "wells of salvation,"

from which he may joyfully and perpetually draw the water of life for the benefit of his people.

But other stores of knowledge, adapted for extemporaneous use, should be accumulated in similar ways. Every minister needs to keep his stock of information, of every kind, replete from the perennial labors of his study; but it especially behooves those who desire to have a ready and extemporaneous command over it, to frequently review whatever has once been learned. Some one has said, that the object of study is to render our knowledge more and more exact, more and more extended, more and more connected. This is a good description of the effort required of those who must depend on their memory in speaking. The principal facts of history, the main outlines of philosophy, the leading principles of science, should be kept fresh in the mind by incessant revision. Our knowledge should be packed, as it were, in small and portable parcels, ready for instant use.

A chronological association of names and events is of great assistance to the memory. This would seem to have been a favorite mode with Edward Everett, of assisting in the recollection of his elegantly written and memorized addresses. At least, he repeatedly took occasion to enumerate the great events that happened contemporaneously, with whatever he might be describing. If he referred to Galileo, for example, the name would recall the reigning sovereign, the state of the church, the condi-

tion of the people, and the discoveries of that age. A good chart is of immense service in fixing in their proper location and chronological relation the great events of past eras indelibly upon the memory. A few dates become rallying points of a large number of facts which cluster around them, and are associated together in the recollection.

To have prepared, in brief compass, a carefully written digest of the principal ethical systems of the non-Christian world, is an admirable mnemonic help to the preacher. A page or two of the common-place-book thus devoted to Plato, Confucius, Buddha, Mahomet, embodying a clear statement of the chief features of their systems, their correspondence with and contrast to the Gospel, will be readily remembered, and will furnish the apt material of a hundred arguments. It would be a good plan to do the same with the prominent anti-Christian theories of modern writers, such as Mill, Spencer, Hæckel, Strauss, and Renan. These must be studied in any event. Our advice is to write and preserve a short summary of each, and to make such frequent reviews of them as to be ready to state and refute them on any occasion.

The so-called "primers" of science, that are now published in such numbers, may conveniently lie upon the study table, to be caught up in an idle hour. A glance at them will refresh the mind, by diversion from its ordinary channels of thought, and will also serve to give a ready and accurate knowl-

edge, in a portable shape, of all the new discoveries. Any ignorance of scientific progress is instantly detected by some one in the audience, and detracts greatly from a minister's proper influence. More, indeed, than it should; for science is a sort of idol in our day, before which all men are ready to burn incense, and to extol its triumphs. If the minister knows it as well as the majority of educated men, he will be able to refer to it on occasion, in a way that will bring no discredit upon his intelligence, and that will also be of great service in illustrating and defending Christian truth.

The writer hopes that he has now succeeded in making clear what, in his view, is the underlying principle of a proper training of the memory, so far as is related to extempore speaking; it is, that the speaker be so much interested in his profession, and so familiar with all the facts and thoughts in any way connected with it, that his mind has become a store-house filled with materials ready to hand, and suitable for all occasions that are likely to arise. It is not so much one speech that he attempts to recollect, as the skillfully shaped materials of many speeches, which may be combined and re-combined, in any variety and in any proportion.

The more thoroughly furnished the mind has become, in every direction, the more easily will it retain the substance of any particular discourse. For, as was before remarked, the most of the discourse cannot be new, save in statement. Its ideas,

facts, philosophy, are all but a part of the preacher's general stock of knowledge. A single sermon is only a selection from the store. Having made an analysis defining the course of thought to be pursued, and having put under each head catch-words indicative of historical instances, or philosophical theories, that are to be used in support of the argument, the speaker has noted all that needs to be fixed in his memory. The rest will recur of itself at the proper time.

Some speakers have advised the beginner to have a few sentences written and committed to memory, at the beginning and end of the sermon; together with some balanced periods to be scattered through it, and thus give an appearance of finish. Our decided impression is, that this is poor policy. Such sentences would be, in any event, a patch-work sewed on, and out of harmony with the rest. Most likely, also, they will be hard to adjust to the remaining parts, so as to seem to come in naturally. The best way is, to attempt no memorizing of sentences or words whatever. Let the mind be entirely concentrated on the ideas to be developed, and the end to be accomplished by the sermon. It may happen, sometimes, that important thoughts are forgotten, or poorly developed, for the mind is not always at its best. There are dull days, and there will be failures, as in all professions. But, usually, ideas that have been properly meditated can be expressed, with at least as much facility before the audience, as they previously were in the study.

Unless greatly embarrassed, in which case it is hardly possible to speak effectively, the mind acts much more freely in presence of the people than anywhere else. There is real work to be done, and the speaker is thoroughly in earnest to do it. The expectant attitude of the audience is enough to stimulate the most sluggish orator. All the powers of the intellect and the heart are aroused to their utmost tension, and the whole man is alive to the emergency. So far from this being any hindrance to speech, it is a potent reënforcement of all those qualities of style which are most needed in public address: pith, point, directness, force. Like the melted iron running from the furnace into the molds prepared for it, our thought and feeling are fused into one fiery stream of ardent expression, setting forth our ideas with vigorous energy. There may be, now and then, some imperfection or lack of polish, which would have been remedied by the pen had the discourse been written; but such blemishes are little noticed in an earnest speech, and are more than made good by the increased vigor of the style.

What was said in the second chapter of the necessity of repeated formulation in the mind of the entire sermon, while preparing it, in order to secure flexibility of language, may be recalled in connection with our present topic. For the words which have once been associated with the ideas are latent in the memory, and sure to revive when needed. Not even the most unlearned man has any trouble in

telling what he knows perfectly. It is what every one is doing daily, and all day long. Why should a preacher have any more difficulty in the pulpit than anywhere else? He will not, after having once mastered the novelty of the situation. How this may be most satisfactorily accomplished will be told in the next chapter.

VIII.

FIRST ATTEMPTS.

Beyond a peradventure the chief difficulty in the mode of preaching we are discussing is to make a beginning. It is the first step that costs in this as in so many other things. The timorous spirit stands shivering on the brink and fears to make the plunge. On the other hand, too venturesome a courage is equally to be guarded against, for it is the fatal mistake of many to be too ambitious in their first attempts. To enter, for example, the pulpit of an old, established church and attempt to preach extemporaneously for the first time to a large and cultivated congregation, is as foolhardy as it would be for a cabin-boy to take command of an ocean steamer. There are years of practice necessary before such an effort could have even a tolerable chance of success.

But fortunately for most young preachers, they are not often called to minister to a large and critical congregation, unless it be temporarily; and in that case they would better confine themselves to their written sermons.

Although the dream of the ambitious student is to be called to such a church for his first pastorate, as a general rule it is a detriment rather than an advan-

tage. The heavy burden of responsibility, the exacting and unceasing duties, the sharp criticism, if they do not stimulate the minister to the impairing of his health, will prove such a burden that he will gladly lay it down after a few years.

Moreover, a prominent position of this kind is almost fatal to any cultivation of the power of extemporaneous preaching. To attempt it, even, would be too great a venture. The best place in which to learn is in humble localities, and before small and uncritical audiences.

Says Dr. Dwight in his instructions to the senior class, reported by his son: the best way to succeed is "by making a first essay among such an assembly as will be least likely to embarrass you, and select a subject with which you are best acquainted. Choose, if you can, a topic which you have argued before. Guard against a failure in the first experiment, for if you fail once you will be likely to fail again. Dr. Dana, of this town, has never practiced extemporaneous speaking, and he has given as a reason for it that he was unsuccessful in his first attempt and never made a second."

In country school-houses and dug-outs, in missionary stations on the frontier or in large cities, in cottages, prayer-meetings, and Bible classes, are the proper opportunities for a successful commencement. With a heart full of love for Christ, and an earnest desire to do good, a young minister preaches in such a place as best he can. He is not thinking of what

appearance he shall make. There are no church committees to please, nor anxious deacons to note his mistakes. The audiences are not in a mood to criticize, but are receptive of the truth, easily responsive to candor and earnestness. He expounds, argues, illustrates, exhorts, not to make an oration, or even to practice his gift, but to win souls. He thinks not of himself at all, but of the Master and his work, praying for the Holy Spirit to help and guide him. In this case, as in all others, "he that loseth his life shall save it." While trying in a humble way to do good to the people, he will gradually learn to preach by preaching: as one learns to skate by skating, or to swim by swimming. Insensibly he will gain coolness and confidence before an assembly. He will learn to think on his feet. Words will come tripping to his tongue, nimble servitors to do his bidding. Homely and cogent illustration will become a habit. He can preach as briefly or as long as he pleases. Any man almost can do so much if he is really in earnest and is willing to make a sufficiently humble beginning.

But this is only the commencement of his training. It is necessary, in order to make the most of these opportunities, to prepare as fully for each occasion as time will allow. The preacher should select his text with care, make a full analysis, meditate the propositions, and go over each point in his mind for an audience in a school-house as for any other. He should avoid all careless expressions, allow no

infelicities of diction which he can help, and, in general, do his best every time. We would advise also as many repetitions as possible of the same discourse that it may be improved and polished by frequent revisal. In this way every lecture or prayer-meeting talk, or exhortation to Sunday scholars, or funeral address, becomes a means of improvement.

If it should be his lot presently to be called to a small church he will, perhaps, find courage to address them, of a rainy day, or a Sunday evening, without his notes. They will, probably, be pleased and ask him to continue his extemporaneous efforts; but even if they do not, he will make bold to repeat them for the sake of ultimate advantage. After some years of practice, if it be in him to learn at all, he will have sufficient skill to venture before large audiences without his manuscript, but even yet we would counsel him prudently to select a sermon which he has often preached before and is perfectly familiar with.

But if, after so much effort, he cannot speak extemporaneously with ease to himself and pleasure to his hearers, he would better read his sermons, for the remainder of his life, as so many great and famous preachers are content to do.

As the most potent encouragement we can receive is from the example of those who have labored and succeeded in the path we are trying, it will be of service to meditate in this connection the graphic account which John Bunyan has given of his first

attempts at public exhortation. Although best known by his books, Bunyan was a very popular preacher in his day. Everywhere through the country he was greeted by throngs of listeners, and when he gave his annual sermons in London the house was too small for the congregation. It will be seen with what self-distrust, and from how small beginnings he attained his eminence. The account is taken from Philip's *Life of Bunyan.*

"And now I am speaking of my experience, I will in this place thrust in a word or two concerning my preaching the Word, and God's dealing with me in that particular also.

"After I had been about five or six years awakened and helped to see for myself both the want and the worth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and also enabled to venture my soul upon Him,—some of the most able among the saints with us (I say the most able for judgment and holiness of life) did perceive, as they conceived, that God had counted me worthy to understand something of His will in His holy and blessed Word, and had given me utterance to express in some measure what I said to others for edification; therefore, they desired me—and that with much earnestness—that I would be willing, at some times, to take in hand in one of the meetings, to speak a word of exhortation unto them.

"After this, sometimes, when some of them did go into the country to teach they would also that I should go with them; where, though as yet I did

not nor durst not make use of my gift in an open way, yet more privately still, as I came amongst the good people in those places, I did sometimes speak a word of admonition unto them also. But in this work, as in all others, I had my temptations attending me and that of divers kinds; as sometimes I should be assaulted with great discouragement therein, fearing that I should not be able to speak a word at all to edification; nay, that I should not be able to speak sense unto the people, at which times I should have such a strange faintness and strengthlessness seize upon my body that my legs have scarce been able to carry me to the place of exercise .... I have, also, at some times, even when I have begun to speak the word with much clearness, evidence and liberty of speech, yet been, before the ending of that opportunity, so blinded and so estranged from the things I have been speaking, and have been also so straightened in my speech, as to utterance before the people, that I have been as if I had not known or remembered what I have been about, or as if my head had been in a bag all the time of my exercise."

The preacher need not chafe at the necessity of humble beginnings and small success at the first. No man expects to reach perfection in any other art without a long and tedious training, beginning at the most insignificant details and working up to the grand results. Painters, sculptors, architects, financiers, authors, generals, are developed by innumerable efforts and by frequent failures before they reach em-

inent success. They are content if twenty years of steady application to their profession will finally win them public recognition and support; why should an extemporaneous speaker expect to succeed with less? His art is as difficult as any, as important, and as brilliant in its rewards.

So far as concerns the pecuniary recompense merely, a leading orator commands any price he chooses to name. And, better than money, he has boundless influence with the people for furthering any great patriotic or benevolent enterprise. His name, at a day's notice, crowds the largest hall in any city. And if he be also a holy man, wise in winning souls, his trophies, by divine help, shall be as the stars that shine forever. All this is worth working for and waiting for.

But it may be objected that this practice of extempore speech before smaller assemblies is a part of the necessary experience of every minister; and still multitudes of them will not venture into the pulpit without a manuscript.

This is true, and it is certainly somewhat remarkable, that men of profound learning, and ardent piety, richly furnished with every literary qualification,—who can, and do, speak with perfect freedom everywhere else, in prayer-meetings and preparatory lectures, in out-districts and halls, in conventions, on public platforms, before large popular assemblies,—should be suddenly smitten with dumbness, on entering a pulpit, and hardly dare to give even a notice,

unless it is written ; would be surprising, were it not so common. The reason appears to be that both preachers and people have tacitly agreed that a different standard of speech shall rule, in the sacred desk, from what is accepted everywhere else. But, so far as it differs from the ordinary style of serious conversation, the standard is a false and conventional one, and should be dethroned as soon as possible. It is hurtful to the efficiency of written sermons, and fatal to any power of extemporaneous utterance. To preach profound and learned discourses, full of the technical terms of theology, may be a fine method of showing the preacher's ability, but it is a very poor means of doing good. The unlearned may, in their simplicity, admire and applaud, but

"The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
But swol'n with the wind and the rank mist they draw."

It is high time that the pulpit should return to a more straightforward and common-sense mode of preaching. The preacher in the pulpit is a man speaking to men, exactly as in any other place, and ability to speak elsewhere is a warrant of his capacity to address them there. It is very probable that, at first, he will make some mistakes in the grammar or the construction of his periods. He may hesitate for a word, occasionally. He will now and again blunder in a date or a quotation. But are manuscript sermons always infallible? Does the minister always read them without hesitation? On the contrary, it has seldom been our fortune to hear a

written sermon, in which there was not more or less of miscalling the words, or losing the place, or going back to give the sentence as it was written. Any one may convince himself, by attentive observation, that those who confine themselves to their manuscripts do not always read with the freedom and force, which, for example, reconciled Dr. Chalmer's audiences to his "paper," and made him, in Scotch parlance, a "fell reader."

Something must be granted to human weakness and imperfection, as in every other art; but, after the training we have described, almost any preacher can so speak that the people will gladly hear. They will pardon any small blemishes. Very likely they will not notice them. If he has learned self-possession, and is not distressed by his mistakes, no one else will care for them. Supposing a blunder to have been committed, it is not worth while to stop and correct it, unless it be a mistake of doctrine. A mere verbal mistake, as for instance a mispronunciation, or miscalling a name, or forgetting the number of the nominative case, or some other grammatical mischance, is best suffered to remain in the oblivion into which it will surely fall. To correct it is to arouse attention, which otherwise was either languid and not noticing anything; or else was so fixed on the thought, as to be comparatively indifferent to minute defects.

There are, in almost every congregation, a few fastidious hearers, who are nothing if not critical.

Their delicate ears will be offended by any deficiency in the finish of the discourse. But it is not worth while to be much afraid of such hearers; for if they could not criticize the form of the sermon, they would discover some other fault in the minister. Apparently their main object in going to church is to indulge their bad habit of fault-finding. If the preacher is to be diverted from what seems to him the right course, by any fear of this class of people, he might better leave the profession at once, for they will destroy both his usefulness and his enjoyment. Not to fear the face of man, to speak not for applause but to do good, to be and to feel responsible to God alone, will enable the preacher to do the best that is in him, serenely indifferent to the petty carpings of hostile criticism.

One of the inherent difficulties of this method of preaching, especially at first, is to adjust the time occupied by a discourse to the conventional ideas of the congregation. In most communities there is a certain standard of length, tacitly agreed upon, from which one cannot prudently vary very much. It is half, or three-quarters of an hour, or an hour, as the case may be. If the preacher conclude much before the time, light-minded hearers will infer he had little to say; if he protract a few minutes beyond, they will grow impatient. In reading a sermon, one can time it beforehand. A certain number of pages will, on the average, occupy so many minutes. But, in speaking, one is apt to be oblivious of the passage

of time. If interested, the hour has flown, or ever he was aware. But the audience are aware of it, and it becomes the preacher to be so likewise. The obvious means of knowing the time is by a clock, if there be one; if not, a watch must be depended on. But it is not a good plan to be seen consulting it.

The writer was preaching, before his ordination, in a church to which it was convenient to invite his professor of elocution, with the purpose of criticizing the service. The next day, the professor occupied the lesson-hour with a series of kindly observations, which induced a proper condition of humility in the subject of them. They were written down, and have been often consulted since, with profit, it is hoped. Among the criticisms was one upon the point before us. The writer had taken out his watch during the sermon to note the time, and the professor said to himself, "The preacher cannot be much engaged in his argument, or he would not be thinking what time it is." He advised, never to do it again, and the writer never has; but he lays the watch on the desk, behind a hymn-book, when no clock is to be seen, and, by long habit, can be conscious of the time without any diversion from the current of thought, or any apparent consultation of the time-piece.

An open watch, to be seen constantly, gives a further advantage, in that it enables one to adjust, in due proportion, the several parts of the sermon. As has been said already, it is sometimes a fault of extem-

pore speakers, that they unduly prolong the introduction, or early divisions, and leave little time for the applications of the subject. Of a famous preacher it was said, that he hardly ever finished a sermon. The subject, under his treatment, branched out in so many directions, and suggested such a number of brilliant illustrations, that he went on and on, until an hour or more had gone; and he was still remote from his intended conclusion. Now an open watch, if consulted occasionally, reminds the prolix speaker that his exordium is devouring his peroration, and helps him to correct this fault.

Dr. Ware, of Harvard University, published, many years ago, a little book containing useful hints on extemporaneous preaching, and among others, he has some suggestions relative to the best way of commencing: one is, that the preacher should at first practice the exposition of considerable passages of scripture. He will be able to say a little on each verse, and can presume upon having enough matter to fill up the time. This is simply a small advance upon the ordinary methods of Bible-class teaching.

He quotes also, with approval, the advice of Bishop Burnet, "that the first attempts be made, by short excursions from written discourses; like the young bird that tries its wings by short flights, till it gradually acquires strength and courage to sustain itself longer in the air."

These are, no doubt, useful devices, but if much relied upon the preacher will never get beyond them.

Crutches are useful to a lame man, but unless he can presently do without them he will never be much of a pedestrian. That preacher will do the best and make the most rapid progress who begins as he intends to continue by preaching regularly-constructed sermons, thoroughly wrought out and delivered without a scrap of paper to serve as a crutch. In such obscure places as we have named there can be no disgrace in a comparative failure, but there is a great opportunity to do good. The preaching is a real, not a factitious exercise, like extemporizing to a seminary class. The mode of it is precisely what will be called for by and by in the larger assemblies. This, then, is the place to learn, and to gain the skill that comes of practice.

But the preacher will never get beyond this, unless he has the courage, after a while, to essay a bolder flight. He may be convincing, edifying, eloquent, in a school-house, and yet be embarrassed in the pulpit, until he has accustomed himself to the more august surroundings. Our advice would be, therefore, not to delay too long the first efforts. A Sunday evening service, largely made up of chorals, and scripture readings, with a space left for "remarks" by the pastor, affords an excellent starting-place in however large and conservative a church. The step is not long from a speech of twenty minutes in such a service to a sermon of half an hour on an ordinary Sunday evening.

The thing can be done by any one who chooses to

do it and who is willing to take as much pains with his extempore sermons as he ordinarily does with his written ones. If, however, his idea of an extempore discourse is that he may pick out some hap-hazard text, of a Sunday afternoon, and by throwing together a few crude ideas, sufficiently prepare himself for the evening, he will not succeed nor deserve success.

The Rev. John Foster writes in one of his letters, early in his ministry, that he awoke one Sabbath morning and remembered that he had to preach that day. The thought was unpleasing, because he had not yet begun to form either of his sermons. He sat up in bed and caught some ideas, but did not write a line or a word. After this he went to church and vexed his suffering audience with sermons as ill-prepared as Dr. Johnson's famous leg of mutton. We do not wonder, to read a few pages further on, that his audiences had dwindled to nothing.

The only way to achieve excellence, in extemporaneous preaching, is by painstaking effort on every occasion. It is a subtle and difficult art, but it may be learned by all who are willing to accept the necessary conditions of all success.

IX.

DELIVERY.

If we may trust the opinion of the world's most famous orators, the chief qualification of a speaker is in his "action," or delivery. Certainly, for the effect of a discourse upon the hearer all depends on the mode in which it is delivered. A piano may be good in every respect, but if the player cannot draw forth its potential music it might as well be of inferior quality. To prepare, with utmost diligence, a speech or sermon, and then spoil it in the utterance, is a grievous waste of labor.

Of an extemporaneous sermon, particularly, which lives and dies on the breath of the speaker, it may be said that upon its delivery depends all its effectiveness. There are few perfect readers, there are still fewer unblemished speakers. Many defects will ordinarily be observable, even in those of great reputation and of acknowledged power. They excel, not in consequence of their defects, but in spite of them. They have positive excellences of delivery which more than compensate for all deficiencies. The audience will forgive much to a speaker who is thoroughly in earnest and fully informed upon his

subject. If he speak so that they can hear him, and his voice be not unpleasing, they will pardon many blemishes. Yet it is well to avoid what faults we may; although after every effort we should still be amenable to criticism.

A very common fault of young speakers is to speak too rapidly. Being full of their subject and somewhat excited by standing before an assembly, they do not realize that the minds of the people are working less quickly than their own, and rush ahead at a pace which soon leaves the audience behind. It is difficult to understand a rapid speaker if the room is large. It is tiresome to follow him. There is in his delivery a monotony like the buzzing of swift machinery. Hardly any blemish is greater in speaking.

It is especially important, at the beginning of a discourse, to be slow and deliberate in our utterance, each word distinct, each period separately marked off from the rest. The express train starts slowly, although it soon attains a speed of sixty miles an hour, otherwise it would jar the passengers. And the minds of men are jarred by too great rapidity in the opening of a speech. They are not yet prepared for the thought. They do not know what it is to be. Still less have they any emotion in regard to it. Therefore, they must be gradually brought to consider and feel the subject by a deliberate utterance of the opening paragraphs. When passion is aroused and the speaker has secured their

sympathy in the full tide of his triumphant argument, he may quicken his pace. But even then a high degree of velocity is less impressive than deliberate utterance.

The best speakers utter from one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty words in a minute, and the less, rather than the greater, number is preferable. As a plain man said of Daniel Webster, "He said little, but every word weighed a pound." The writer heard this great orator at Albany, in his old age and during his tour through New York, speaking in defense of his views of the constitution. The schools were dismissed, that the children might attend. A vast crowd assembled by the park in front of the Congress Hall, and the statesman, enfeebled by age and sickness, came out slowly to address the concourse. The ponderous movement of his arm, as it rose and fell in gesture; the deep tones, like the slow vibration of a great bell; the emphatic pauses and deliberate utterance, remain, after thirty years, fixed in the memory of one who was then a mere boy.

Great deliberateness is characteristic of almost all great speakers. Of William Wirt, one of America's most famous orators, we are told by his biographer, "He was calm, deliberate, and distinct in his enunciation. His key was that of earnest, animated argument." It was said of Dr. Nettleton by one of his admirers, "That whisper of his was so distinct, so full of feeling, so potent, that it penetrated every

corner of the house, and his distinct pronunciation was one of the great excellences of his preaching." The preacher, then, will, first of all, strive to restrain his impetuosity and speak slowly,— "*Ut tamen deliberare non haesitare videatur*," yet so as to appear rather to deliberate than to hesitate.

It is particularly necessary for a speaker to avoid any faltering at the commencement, unless he choose to imitate the artful modesty which Homer says was characteristic of Ulysses, as if he were somewhat diffident and unwilling to speak in the presence of such able men. A slow, thoughtful utterance, as of one who is weighing well his words and gives them forth after full consideration, without trepidation and without confusion, is the best at first. Nor need there be any artificiality or insincerity attributed to this mode of utterance. At the outset of his sermon a speaker ought to be in precisely that mental attitude. He is to speak to men on a solemn occasion. Issues of life and death are in his hands. An expectant audience is patiently awaiting his opening words, looking for comfort and edification. He does wisely to look well to the steps by which he leads them to the consideration of divine truth. By gradual and deliberate approach he brings them to understand and be interested in his subject. This is the process most natural to his mind and to theirs. A natural delivery requires great deliberation at the commencement of a sermon.

On a proper management of pauses depends a

large part of the effectiveness of a speaker. We are not now referring to emphatic pauses in the sentence, the consideration of which belongs properly to Elocution ; but to those longer pauses which a speaker employs to rest himself or his audience. There should be, for example, a sensible pause at the conclusion of each principal division, enough to allow a relaxation of the people from a strained position to attend to any little comforts of themselves or the children, and, as it were, to take breath for a new start. The intervals allowed by some able speakers for this purpose are quite noticeable, and whoever has benefited by them will appreciate their convenience.

As it has seemed to us, the frequent decrees, letters, lists of witnesses, introduced by Demosthenes and ordered to be read by the clerk, were not only for their value as evidence, but were intended to give the speaker an opportunity for resting his voice, and for relief of the assembly, which would otherwise have been wearied with so long an oration. During the formal reading of a well-known decree or vote they could change their position, look around, converse a little, go out for refreshments, and then begin afresh to listen, as the orator rose to continue his speech. By this means the long oration became rather a series of short ones, comparatively easy to attend to.

But whether or not this is a correct explanation, it is a good plan to rest an audience in church by an occasional pause of, it may be, several seconds. The

preacher, for example, stops to look up a passage in the Bible and turns to it with intentional deliberation. Meanwhile the people are unconsciously relieved of the effort to attend and are rested. Or, perhaps, he introduces a quotation from the poets, a passage of some well-known prose writer, or even a newspaper paragraph. It may not be specially important, but if allied to the theme it will not interrupt the argument and will serve the purpose of a rest. The people's attention can wander for a moment and return without losing an integral part of the sermon. Any innocent device by which two or three intervals of rest are afforded during the discourse will add to the satisfaction of those who hear it.

Loud vociferation is not often called for except at a camp-meeting in the woods. It may be needful and appropriate where the audience is scattered over a wide area, the wind soughs through the trees, the uneasy animals distract attention, and people are always moving about. To speak loud under such circumstances is the necessary condition of being heard at all. But in an ordinary church to split the ears of the congregation with explosive tones is entirely unnecessary. A quieter style is more impressive. "It is not the thunder that kills, but the lightning." For all ordinary services the quiet, conversational tones of a gentleman speaking in a parlor are sufficient. Occasionally greater force and emphasis are allowable, but if they become habitual

they lose their effect. It is the contrast that startles the ear, like the effect of light and shade in a picture.

There is current an anecdote of Rev. Rowland Hill to the effect that on being blamed for using so much superfluity of voice in the pulpit, he replied that once a man fell into a pit and he lifted up his voice for help and shouted so as to be heard a mile; no one blamed him then, nor ought they to blame him if by loud outcry he sought to save sinners from hell. Which is very true, if the outcry were necessary in order to make the sinners hear, or to impress them with the truth; but it will, on the contrary, diminish the impression, if frequently indulged in. There may be, however, circumstances of excitement or grave crises of public affairs, where a loud tone is the natural expression of the prevalent emotion. Thus the English embassador said admiringly of John Knox, after one of his vehement addresses, "It put more life into him than six hundred trumpets." But usually something less than six hundred trumpets will be voice enough.

Nor are we inclined to favor that style of delivery which is marked by running all around the pulpit, and indulging in a variety of excited gesticulations. We are aware that great names can be adduced in support of this practice, notably that of Rufus Choate, who gestured with head, hands, and feet, and all parts between. Not such are the movements of a well-bred, cultivated gentleman. He may be in

earnest, but he is quiet; and the more earnest he is the more significantly quiet he will be. Low tones, measured utterance, few words, mark the deepest passion among the better grades of society.

Some speakers employ a sustained tone, pitched on a high key, like a rude sort of chanting. Possibly, indeed, chanting originated in the long-drawn recitative of prayers and passages of Scripture. Among some sects it seems to be the essential sign of an orthodox and edifying discourse; just as the soldiers of Cromwell proved their orthodoxy by their nasal pronunciation. This is nearly intolerable to cultivated ears. A variety in the tones and naturalness of inflection are to be sought by one who would please as well as instruct the hearer.

It would seem to be superfluous to inculcate the precept, that all levity is to be avoided in the pulpit, were we not so often made painfully aware that the precept is necessary. A judge upon the bench, in a case of life and death, allows no levity in court. The business is a serious one, and must be seriously administered. A preacher derogates from his own influence, and lowers the dignity of his office, very much in proportion to the amount of humor which he allows to creep into his style. Nor is a reputation for wit, outside the pulpit, a desirable one in a minister. It is said that the late Senator Morton, of Indiana, was extremely witty in his youth. He made one speech, at the beginning of his public life, which proved that he had extraordinary command of the

risibilities of an audience. But afterwards he refused to indulge this faculty; for he said, the people do not choose for grave affairs a man who amuses them, but one whom they respect for a serious and weighty character.

Equally to be condemned, with levity of speech, is levity of demeanor. All hand-shaking in the pulpit, or jovial welcome of brother ministers, seems to us a breach of decorum. They have come, not for a display of good-fellowship, but to lead the people in the worship of God, and their conduct should be, in all respects, consistent with that design. To beckon to the janitor, or select passages in the Bible, or turn over the notes of a sermon, during the singing of hymns and anthems, although often done by the most pious ministers, is really an impropriety. Suppose a deacon should do the same, while the minister is praying! If the singing means anything, it is a service of praise to God, in which the pastor should join, as well as the rest. The selection of chapters and arrangement of notes are better attended to before the service begins. We confess, also, that we do not like to see the pulpit turned into a place for adjusting the dress, by removing overcoat, gloves and rubbers, disposing hat and umbrella, settling the cravat, and the like. It savors of simplicity and unconventionality, to be sure; but it is that of the backwoods. What gentleman would do such things in a drawing-room? And why should a pulpit be inferior, in its claim upon the small proprieties of life?

But it is time to note the positive qualities that make up the excellence of delivery, that all our attention may not be taken up with noting defects. One should, above all, strive to be, and to appear, thoroughly in earnest. This is the most essential feature of a good delivery. No other excellencies can compensate for its absence. Its presence will outweigh many defects.

The anecdote of Betterton, the player, is worth recalling in this connection. When asked, by a prelate of the English church, "how it came to pass that the clergy, who spoke of things real, affected the people so little, and the players, who spoke of things barely imaginary, affected them so much? he said, 'My lord, I can assign but one reason: we players speak of things imaginary as though they were real, and too many of the clergy speak of things real as though they were imaginary.'"

No one desires the preacher to become an actor, in scriptural phrase, a "hypocrite"; but if he does not profoundly feel the truths he is uttering, he would better not speak at all; if he does feel them, his tones, gestures, features, with proper limitation, should testify to the depth of his emotion. If he is aroused at all during the week, let it be in the hour when he is speaking the great truths of the gospel, and immortal destinies are hanging on his words. A listless, perfunctory manner, or languid voice, is an insult to a grave assembly, which has, presumably, gathered for matters of concern.

It would not be tolerated anywhere but in the pulpit; it should not need to be tolerated there. If the speaker is really anxious to do good it will not. His longing to benefit men will throw ardor into his voice, pathos into his tones, alertness into every movement.

A sympathetic voice, penetrative to the heart, and seeming to sway it by unconscious power, is a charming quality of some speakers. It would seem to be a natural gift. There do not appear to be any rules for its successful cultivation, save in the development of an affectionate interest in the congregation, individually. It is the quality called "Unction" in the schools, a tender interest in the hearer, and desire for his improvement, manifested in the very tones in which he is addressed. Unction is the expression of sympathetic emotion. Some men are more easily aroused and more expressive of feeling than others; but all can cultivate those qualities of heart, which create a sympathy between pastor and people. If the minister prays much for families under his charge, mentioning them by name at the throne of grace; if he studies their peculiarities with a view to using arguments and motives that shall bear on their conversion; if, as he looks over the congregation, he sees one or another, who is near the Kingdom and may possibly be brought in that day, there is apt to be something of this personal interest manifest in voice and manner. The magnetic currents of a community of feeling flow through preacher and people. They regard him a friend and

helper, who is interceding for them with heaven, and longs to save them from peril.

Such feeling may be counterfeited, but the counterfeit will presently be detected, and then the speaker will have no more influence with that congregation. To be effective he must be animated by a genuine, not a simulated, emotion. If he wishes them to weep, he must weep himself. The tones of pretended pathos do not warm, any more than a painted fire. But the voice of real passion asserts itself, and strikes a responsive chord in the heart of the dullest hearer.

Still, it is to be doubted whether a minister should seek to be wrought up into this rather ecstatic condition, every Sunday. A tearful interest in souls is always, theoretically, the proper sentiment of a preacher; but, practically, it is not likely to be always his actual feeling. He may, it is true, strive to awaken his dormant emotions; but even if that were possible, it is not desirable, for the best effect on the audience, to have all Sabbaths alike in their impression. There are, in the Scriptures, texts of cheer and hope, the trumpet-call to battle and victory. There are themes pertaining to the manly duties of a Christian in the world, demanding a calm, judicial manner, and tones free from passion. Sometimes, the grave consequences of sin will clothe the pulpit in the terrors of the law, and seem to re-echo the thunders of Sinai. If the preacher attempts to be pathetic on every occasion, he throws away the opportunity of different and equally important

impressions; and, besides, gives his services a monotony, which is always to be avoided. Rather let the emotion felt, and which appears in the delivery, be such as most naturally arises from the subject, whether of courage, confidence, consolation, apprehension, or practical resolve.

It is one of the advantages of extemporaneous preaching, that the speaker can look continuously at his audience. He is not under the necessity of bending the eyes upon his notes every moment. There is power in the eye, no less than in the voice, to convey all varieties of emotion—indignation, surprise, determination, appeal. How important an item of the general impression this is, is evident from the fact that all the people instinctively try to look at the preacher. If there are pillars in the sanctuary, those who sit behind them are uneasy until they can change their position, although they may hear perfectly well; for they know they shall better understand, if they can see the eyes and face of the minister. If the latter remembers this fact, he will refrain, perhaps, from gazing steadfastly at a remote corner, as some do; and avoid looking all the time to the right or the left, as others. He will at least endeavor to look around upon the congregation in a natural way, so that each one may imagine that his pastor's eye is upon him, and that a part of the sermon may be meant for him individually.

To preach with the eyes shut, as a great French preacher is said to have done, belongs to the artifi-

ciality of a memorized discourse, rather than to the naturalness of extempore speech. We do not suppose any ministers at the present day would go so far as to shut their eyes; but the introversion of the mind in striving to recall a half-remembered plan, gives them such an appearance of not seeing anything, that their eyes might as well be shut. A perfect familiarity with the scheme of the sermon, so that no effort is needed to recall it, frees all the faculties for immediate action, gives opportunity to look at the audience, adds animation to the feature, and renders the whole discourse more free and effective.

After the service is ended, the preacher will be wise if he seeks, by rest and solitude, to restore his nerves to their normal condition. He should recollect that mind and body have been under intense exertion for two hours or more. The blood swells the veins of head and throat, feet and hands are cold, all parts of the body are languid from weariness. The more the minister has put of his life into his preaching, the more exhausted he will be. If "fresh as a lark," probably the people will not be quite so fresh. Now, in this condition of nervous exhaustion, to expose the lungs to the air, is to endanger taking cold; to sing, is to rasp the throat with an altogether needless labor and roughen the voice for the evening service. Especially, let him beware of the siren voice of the Sunday-school superintendent, who has a class of ladies, that are anxious to have

their dear pastor for a teacher. He will undoubtedly yield to such a seductive invitation, but will do so at his cost. We do not remember any pastor teaching, without breaking down in a few months; that is, if he had any merit as a preacher. There are men of iron, or of wood, who can conduct morning service, Bible-class, afternoon mission, evening service, and still be ready for a minister's meeting on Monday. They can do so much, because, so to speak, they do so little. They put no exhaustive labor upon the sermon, and therefore can teach afterwards, as well as not.

The principal men of a church ought to be made to understand that true preaching is a source of great weariness, for the time, and they will generally prefer that the minister should not waste on a few scholars the energy that properly belongs to the whole congregation.

The preacher will be thankful for a few words of kindly appreciation from any who have been benefited by the sermon; but let him be very careful not to seek for compliments. It is a weakness resulting from vanity, to turn, what was supposed to be for edification, into an occasion of self-laudation. It destroys the effect of the preaching wherever seen or suspected. It renders the preacher wretchedly uncomfortable, for the praise will seldom equal his desires. If he has sincerely done his best, he may with confidence leave the result with God. If he has done less than his best, there is place for repentance, in doing better next time.

X.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS.

Although, at first thought, it might be supposed that one earnestly engaged in his work could rise superior to all considerations of merely physical and material matters, yet the fact is far otherwise. Our nature is two-fold: while by the spirit related to the skies, our bodies hold us down to earth. The soul is absolutely dependent on the body for its means of communication with the outer world, and whatever affects the condition of the corporeal frame helps or hinders the free communication of feeling and thought. Even an apostle was hindered by his thorn in the flesh, though divine grace enabled him to endure it. And there are many thorns ready to pierce the flesh of the extemporaneous preacher, and detract from the efficiency of his most careful preparations.

In the first place, it is no mean advantage to have the room in which the services are held in perfect condition for the comfort of the congregation. If the church be smoky, or cold, or replete with furnace gas; if the windows are dim by day and the lamps are dull at night; if ventilation is neglected, so that five hundred people are in a semi-asphyxiated

condition from lack of oxygen; if many are going out, or the children are gathering noisily in the porch for the Sunday-school; if the pulpit is an eyrie perched on high, from which the minister peers out as an eagle from his nest; if there be a large church and a small congregation; if the choir is tittering and whispering in consultation over the concluding anthem; if the day is intensely hot, so that the only animation is in the languid movement of fans; or if the thunder is reverberating in the heavens and creating apprehension of a wetting before the congregation can reach home: vain are the efforts of the most eloquent orator. These are physical conditions which mar success, and to correct them, when possible, is of first importance.

What preacher has not felt his heart sink within him when, after a week of laborious preparation, he came to the church on Sunday morning and found that the fires had been neglected, or the room, for any reason, uncomfortable? He bids farewell to all hopes of moving or molding his audience for that day. Indeed he knows if the unfavorable conditions are repeated many times he will presently be speaking to empty benches; for, excepting the old guard, which comes in any event, the people loving their ease will stay at home for the balance of the season. We have known, in a western city, a few cold Sundays, at the beginning, diminish an audience for the entire winter.

Accordingly, if the pastor is a practical man, he

will, in some way, see to it that the church is in a proper condition for the comfort of the people. He will recognize the importance of heat and ventilation in their relation to the gospel, nor fondly imagine that his people are superior to atmospheric influences. In these days of stained glass and somber interiors it is difficult to get a cheerful light, and yet it is almost impossible to preach successfully in the gloom. People, in spite of aesthetic canons, love a bright room, and hate a dark one, without knowing why. It is impossible to have an exhilarated audience in a somber apartment. The managers of the theatre understand this, and however old or shabby the building may be, they see that it is abundantly lighted. A minister cannot always control the lighting of his church, but if he appreciates its importance, he may educate the trustees to his ideas, after a while.

To preach in an ancient country school-house, beginning "at early candle-light," where the candle is a taper of tallow and dimly casts a feeble glimmer among the benches, is such a trial as can be surmounted only by the highest devotion. And to have a good prayer-meeting in such a room is an almost impossible triumph of faith.

It is a hard matter to preach with satisfaction on a rainy day. The church is gloomy on account of the storm. The audience is thin and unresponsive. The minister dislikes to waste an elaborate preparation upon so few, and increases the dullness of the

occasion by the indifferent repetition of an old sermon. This is a decided mistake. Such an audience deserves the best sermon the preacher can give. They ought to be repaid for coming out through the rain, that they may be encouraged to come again and bring others with them. At the same time, they will need a different kind of discourse from the ordinary fair-day audience. It should be more weighty in thought, more packed with argument, less illustrated and ornamented, more practical and warm with fervid appeals that may overcome the chilliness of the day. Such changes in a sermon are easily made by any one practiced in extemporization.

It has, of late years, become the genial custom of many churches to adorn the pulpit with flowers. These give a homelike appearance, and add brightness to the sanctuary. But the fashion is easily overdone. A few roses carelessly put in a pretty vase are a modest and proper ornament. A pulpit embowered in potted plants, trailing vines, elaborate bouquets of hot-house flowers, and made-pieces, crosses, harps, and the like, looks like a florist's window. If the preacher speaks from a bower of camellias it is hard to take his words seriously. It seems as if he must be a part of the show. Moreover, a very reprehensible spirit of rivalry is sometimes awakened by such displays, among ladies of different churches, to see which can outdo the other. The Christmas or Easter decorations become a

measure of their purses, rather than of their devotion, and a mere attraction to an idle crowd.

No minister, who is a lover of music, can fail to be affected by the anthems rendered by the choir, and by the mode in which the hymns are sung. Good and appropriate music lifts both pastor and people into an atmosphere of devotion and spiritual sensibility very favorable to reception of gospel truth. If the leader has good judgment in the selection of opening pieces, and is willing to listen to suggestions respecting the tunes set to the hymns, let the minister cherish him with thankfulness. But, unfortunately, such choir-leaders are not always to be found.

The circumstances which affect the physical condition of the speaker, are equally important with those relating to the comfort of the congregation. In order to preach with ease and effectiveness he needs to be, as nearly as possible, in perfect health. There are instances, to be sure, of clergymen who have preached with almost superhuman eloquence, while agonized with nervous pain; but it was done at a ruinous expense of the vital energy, and they were soon disabled, or in their graves. To preach through a long life, and to preach with a maximum of power, is only possible to one who enjoys vigorous health. The great preachers have been, for the most part, robust men, capable of any exertion, and able to endure any fatigue. Good health is an almost indispensable condition of success in the min-

istry: the preservation of it, therefore, is a sacred duty. All measures of exercise, sleep, diet, that conduce to health, are moral obligations upon a minister; if he would present, not only his spirit, but his body, an acceptable offering to the Lord.

The speaker should beware of entering the pulpit weary and overworked. Of course, it is not always possible to avoid this, but such should be his endeavor. To this end, very little work ought to be done, after noon of Saturday. The preparations should all be brought within the previous days. To work late on Saturday evening, or to rise with feverish haste on Sunday morning and complete the sermon, may be possible for one who reads, but will ruin the effectiveness of an extempore preacher. In one of his most useful papers, entitled "The mind's maximum," Rev. E. E. Hale shows that only a given amount of the best work can be obtained from the mind in any one day. From two to four hours of original composition are the most that can be expected from the most fertile brain. If it tries to do more, the product is inferior, and the brain is prematurely exhausted. We believe Sir Walter Scott expressed the same opinion. This is a useful hint for those who are disposed to defer their preparation till Sunday morning. There are, if they have two services, three or four hours before them of severe labor, when they will need all their energy in its most concentrated form. To exhaust it, previously, by hard work in the study, is as unwise as

it would be to work a race-horse for some hours before he enters the lists.

In order to the perfect self-mastery which is requisite for success in speaking, it is desirable to secure, if possible, a quiet hour, before entering the pulpit. If there is a comfortable study at the church, and the preacher can be free from interruption, this is the best place for final preparation; for it can be continued till the organ sounds the voluntary, and no long walk or greeting of friends will divert his thoughts, between the study and the pulpit. But if no room be available at the church, his study at home must be made to answer, as well as it can, the same purpose. No severe effort is contemplated in this final hour, but merely a meditative review of the plan of the sermon, and, as it were, a gathering up of all the faculties for the coming occasion. Then, with whatever trepidation, he may enter the sacred desk, conscious that he has at least done his best to deserve success.

However, with all the precautions that ingenuity can suggest, or prudence take, there will often be dull days in which the mind will not work. There may be some languid condition of the atmosphere, or a morbid state of the nerves, rendering it impossible to accomplish any satisfactory results. Even the reading of the Bible becomes a difficult task at these times; the reader miscalls the words of the familiar chapter, and loses his place in the periods. It is a burden to lead the devotions of the people in

prayer,—the halting tongue refusing to utter the customary petitions. Nothing goes aright, because the preacher himself, in his physical system, is wrong. On such a day, our counsel is to make no attempt at extempore preaching if possible to avoid it. There is no probability of success. The harp is out of tune, and must be retuned before it will render harmonious music. No need, however, to be discouraged on this account. Such days of languor come to all men, in all professions. In this condition he must have recourse to a manuscript; and even then he will probably go home disgusted, and consult his wife on the propriety of retiring to a farm.

If the state of his privy purse will allow him to run off for a week, a short journey is the best corrective of this nervous condition. New sights, new faces, the excitement of travel, will restore his system to its wonted equilibrium. Or, if he be a lover of nature, he may take a tent, with rod and gun, and hie to the woods. There, on the border of a lake, catching and cleaning the fish, or shooting the plump ducks which shall furnish his dinner, his vexations will pass away like the mist of the morning, and he will come back to his parish with a new heart for the work.

A great temperance in diet is advisable before speaking. Only so much food is needed as can be easily digested before the time of service. A hearty meal, which leaves a sense of repletion, dulls the

faculties, and renders difficult the exceptional mental activity required of the speaker. In this particular each man must be his own judge, but it will be found that the less there is eaten on Sunday the better the sermons will be. If he can secure an interval of absolute rest between the services, a great point is gained. In some parts of the country the two sermons come so near together as to allow of no real repose. But this is one of the old-fashioned burdens, which the people are learning to throw off. If there are two services, it is far better to have them morning and evening, allowing thus a time of recuperation, both to pastor and people.

Few pious customs were more irrational than the habit, prevalent in some quarters a half century ago, of three sermons on a Sunday. The people went to sleep under them, and no marvel. How could anybody's spiritual digestion endure three solid sermons in one day?

We do not, however, so much applaud the growing habit of a single service on Sunday. While one able sermon is enough for one hearer, yet there are always many who cannot be present in the morning, and some who, being tired with the week's work, will not. For these an evening service is desirable. To give up the evening to a young people's meeting, or prayer-meeting of the elders, or to close the church altogether, unless there are other churches near, is to leave, in the cities, the open door for theaters and concerts. Some place of

gathering, some mode of spending the evening, the young people will have. A bright, attractive service in church, with a plenty of good singing, and a short, pithy extemporaneous sermon, will not indeed deplete the theatre, but will be a formidable rival to it.

Nor should any minister in good health demur at the amount of work involved in two services. The talk about the unendurable labor involved in "two sermons a week" is nonsensical. Any lawyer in good practice does as much speaking; any journalist does as much writing, as is now ordinarily required of clergymen. It is the innumerable calls of an inferior importance which fritter away his time and wear him down. Let him exercise a wise economy in the matter of conventions, ministerial gatherings, reform meetings, sociables, and tea-parties, and he will have left abundant energy and time to prepare one written and one unwritten sermon a week. Besides, there are many alleviations, from exchanges, from special union services and Sabbath-school concerts, from the advent of distinguished brethren who must be invited to preach, from the perennial agents of the benevolent societies. There is also a relief to the throat, brain, and entire system, in alternating the two styles of preaching. The strain of a written sermon is altogether different from that of an extempore one. To pass from one to the other is less of a burden than a pleasure.

There is also, in the different modes of preparation

required by the two styles of sermonizing, a sensible relief from that inertness of mind which is so often the bane of literary composition. There are not many hours in a week in which the brain is in exactly the condition to evolve the finished thought needed for a written sermon. There may, possibly, be enough for one: there will hardly be sufficient for two. But herein is the advantage of another style of composition. The whole mental attitude, the entire method of production, are different in the extempore sermon. There is no need to finish anything as yet. The mind may be in a discursive, apprehensive state. It can ramble at will over the realms of thought. The brain is rested by being out of harness for a time, and can browse like a horse out at pasture. The extempore sermon can be prepared during a ramble on the country roads, or in a long drive over the hills, or swinging idly in a hammock, or dreaming between the paragraphs of a favorite book. The thought grows and accumulates, half unconsciously, until in some clear and crystalline hour it suddenly assumes the proportions of a discourse. Difference of occupation rests the brain, and the two sermons demand but a little more effort than one would have done.

In the felicities of domestic life, we have noticed that the anxious mother of a single child often wastes as much solicitude over her one darling as another bestows on a family of six; and we have been reminded of this in seeing how much agonized

reconsideration can be given to a single sermon, by a minister who preaches only once on Sunday, as compared to the cheerful activity of one who has two services on the Sabbath, and several additional ones during the week. There is a point, beyond which the refinement of a discourse is rather an injury to it than otherwise. On the average, each of the two sermons will be better ones, so far as the true purpose of a sermon is concerned, than if the entire week had been spent upon either of them separately. This may seem paradoxical, but it will be proved by experiment.

In order to secure the full benefit of variety in sermons, there should be a difference in other respects also. To change from the written to the extempore style is a very great relief, and it is equally a relief to alter the entire scope and purpose of the evening sermon. If the morning discourse was a spiritual meditation, let the evening be some theme of practical morality. If the mind of preacher and people has been exercised upon a profound doctrine, there may well be, at the second service, a descriptive sermon of some Old Testament narrative, with appropriate lessons. A total change of subject, treatment, and manner rests the audience and the speaker. A successful clergyman expressed the opinion, some years ago, that there was too much preaching; one sermon a day was enough, he said. But when he came to explain his meaning, it appeared that by "sermon" he meant a spiritual medita-

tion calculated to affect the feelings profoundly, and that he thought the evening should be devoted to discussion of practical subjects of duty and morality. He acted upon that method himself, and his evening services were always crowded, although the "lecture," as he called it, might be an hour long.

It conduces greatly to the minister's comfort, and to his ability to endure a large amount of work, if he has learned how properly to manage his voice. The number who become disabled, by what is known as "the minister's sore throat," is much greater than it should be. This appears to be induced partly by a monotonous manner of speaking, and partly by defective acoustic properties of the churches. Those who read sermons are very apt to fall into a regular rhythmic cadence, the voice ascending and descending through a limited range of notes, from exordium to peroration. This wearies the audience, and wears on the throat of the clergyman, until it becomes so inflamed, that a very little additional exposure brings on an attack of bronchitis. To change from the written to the extempore style will partially remedy this difficulty, by bringing a different set of muscles into play. Speaking is different from reading, in many ways. The head is more erect, the chest expanded, the whole action of the body more vigorous, emotion and voice more varied.

But extempore speakers often fall into a monotone, or still worse, a sing-song manner. The former would seem to arise from a lack of interest in what

they are saying. At least, it is difficult to see how the voice can be monotonous, if the breast is surcharged with a variety of emotions, such as would be appropriate to the different parts of a sermon. If so, the remedy would be to utter no word which the speaker does not feel. Hardly any one speaks monotonously in private conversation. He is animated, interested, and his tones are varied, as a matter of course. To cure a sing-song delivery is more difficult, because, in its earlier stages as a habit, it seems to result from diffidence and undue excitement. It is for this reason very characteristic of women who exhort in public. A minister can rid himself of a sing-song habit, if he will begin before it is inveterate, by asking his friends to tell him when they observe it, and by having often in mind the necessity of being on his guard, in order to secure natural cadences. It is worth one's while to be particular, for such a tone ruins any sermon, and ultimately takes away every pleasing quality from the voice.

It is more difficult to overcome those embarrassments of the voice which are occasioned by defective acoustic qualities in the audience-room of the church. In a very large number of churches, it is impossible to speak naturally, because it is so hard to be heard at all. The preacher has to adopt a hard, metallic tone, to penetrate the alcoves, recesses, and rafters; or to overcome the echo. The old-fashioned, nearly square churches, with flat roof and a gallery running around three sides, seem to be the

easiest for speaking, however large they may be. The modern gothic, especially if the nave is long, and the ceiling remote, are the worst. In such a church the ablest speaker may well despair.* Something may be done, by stretching a number of fine wires across the spaces where the echoes are, or by banners hung through the room, as in one church we could name. It will be better still, if the trustees will allow the pulpit to be moved. Sometimes advancing it ten feet towards the audience, at the sacrifice of a few pews, or bringing it to one side against a pillar, will partially remedy the confusion of sounds, that otherwise converts the church into a miniature cave of Æolus. A still better remedy would be for clergymen to refuse to preach in such churches, on any condition. But this is somewhat too heroic to be generally adopted.

Perhaps it will occasion surprise, if we include obedience to the Fourth Commandment as among the essential physical conditions of success in the ministry. But we are sorry to say we have seen the spirit of it violated, with unfortunate effects, by many ministers. The precept requires abstinence from work, one day in seven. Now as a minister works, and works hard, of necessity on the Sabbath, it is evident that he must rest on another day, or he breaks the commandment, essentially. Monday is usually the day of rest for a minister. If he keeps it, with religious scruples, abstaining from all of his ordinary avocations, it shall be well with him, and

his days shall be long in the land. But how often there is a minister's meeting, devoted to a report of the sermons, or a discussion of theological topics; how many set apart the forenoon to their arrears of correspondence, and the afternoon to parish calls! Possibly, a daily prayer-meeting may claim their leadership at noon, and a special service be appointed for the evening. Now all this seems to us a direct violation of the principle of the Fourth Commandment. It is morally blameless, because the motive is the service of God. But it will be physically punished, for the laws of God are not violated with impunity, even from the best of motives. Lassitude is sure to follow. In a few weeks there will be a lack of energy. Many days will be wasted in a fretful inaction; perhaps, sickness may ensue; and all because the minister forgot that he needed a Sabbath of rest as well as the people.

XI.

SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS.

Although we have said, thus far, little concerning the spiritual aspects and conditions of extemporaneous preaching; it is not because we considered them of small importance, but because we preferred to treat each topic independently in its proper order. In all preaching, whether from notes or extempore, as the object to be secured is a spiritual one, the conversion and edification of the people, it is evident that the moral and spiritual condition of the preacher is of unspeakable importance. It is the impartation of spiritual life. How can he impart what he does not possess? It is to lead men to Christ. How lead men where he does not go himself? It is to prepare them for "fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost," which fellowship he must experience before he can share it with others.

The first and most imperative duty of a minister is to keep clear the fountain of his own piety. It has been well said, by some one, that the vital principle of preaching is condensed by St. Jude into a few lines; "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves, on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

keep yourselves in the love of God." The power of a preacher lies in the power of godliness, or what is the same thing, the power of faith. The ancient rhetoricians insisted, first of all, that the orator must be a good man, for virtue is the secret of power in the speaker. Much more is this true of the Christian ministry, which has absolutely no excuse for being, except it can lead men to holiness and to God. As we have said, this is needful for all preachers, but it is most especially needful for an extemporaneous preacher, who must rely for his words, and the best portion of his thoughts, upon the immediate presence and assistance of the Holy Ghost.

The fundamental, spiritual condition, then, of this method of preaching, is faith. It is not only true of the Christian life, that "the just shall live by his faith," but it is true also that according to the preacher's faith will be his power and success. The man has evidently been with God; he has received an unction from the Holy One; he has drawn nigh to the mount in earnest prayer; all his fortune, reputation, influence, are cast upon the divine mercy, and rely upon the divine help. What, after this, does he fear in the face of mortal man! He enters the pulpit in an exalted frame. He is not caring for himself. His appearance, intellectual ability, what people will think of him, are of no further consequence. He is there, an ambassador from God. He has a message to deliver, and woe be him, if it is not faithfully delivered. Like Samuel in the night,

he has heard the divine voice, and the words given him must be spoken, without fear or hesitation.

This is the old, prophetic fire, rekindled in the Christian pulpit, and proving that the modern "schools of the prophets" are not altogether misnamed. It is the prophetic office revived and regulated to meet the needs of the Christian church. A man of a burning, zealous faith, will inevitably convey something of his own warmth to his hearers. They will no longer stop to criticise his tones or style; they are rapt into a higher atmosphere of spiritual emotion, and are fed with the manna given for the day.

To sink all thought of self and its petty concerns, to be indifferent to any fault-finding, to be utterly devoted to the spiritual benefit of the congregation, is a prime requisite for ability in extemporaneous speech. If the preacher lack many things and have this, he will succeed, in his proper avocation of winning souls; failing of this, all other qualifications are but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Next in order of importance, and in fact resultant from a lofty and ardent faith in God, is that serene courage which can never be perturbed, but is so perfect as to be hardly conscious of itself. The preacher may be a young man, called to speak to those who are older and more experienced, possibly in many things wiser than himself. They are men of business, accustomed to deference, proud and self-willed, perhaps wealthy, and haughty in the consciousness

of wealth. But they are sinners, and need the gospel as much as the poorest. They know it, and the minister knows it. He is there to tell them so, plainly, emphatically, repeatedly. If he dare do this, if he can do it skillfully, affectionately, without violence or personalities, they will respect him and his preaching. If he dare not do it, they may applaud, but will secretly despise him.

Sometimes it needs a dauntless heroism to face a great popular sin, and speak of its enormity in the presence of leading men who prefer that nothing should be said about it. It was their unquailing courage on the question of slavery, which won their influence, to many of the great preachers of the last generation. They risked position, salary, and reputation, over and over again, to declare unpopular truth, and though it often aroused fierce opposition, it ended by giving them power and fame.

It was their courage, more even than their ability, which gave the great French preachers, of the time of Louis XIV, their marvelous hold on the giddy population of Paris. When we reflect how the royal power had become exaggerated, so that all men trembled before the king, and did not dare to look above his shoe-buckles; how nobles, people and clergy, alike, joined in a chorus of applause to whatever his majesty might condescend to do, however iniquitous or tyrannical; we can appreciate the bravery of Bourdaloue, when, after preaching on David's sin of adultery, before a crowded assembly

of courtiers, he suddenly turned to Louis with the thunderbolt, "Thou art the man"!

Equally courageous, though in a slightly different way, was the celebrated exordium to the funeral address by Massillon. The Great King was now dead; "Louis le Grand," as he had proudly termed himself. His nobles, relatives, ambassadors, officers,—a tearful and excited concourse,—had gathered to the imposing obsequies in the cathedral. The preacher ascended the pulpit, all eyes upon him. He gazed upon the mortal remains of so much splendor and power, and then upon the assembly, hushed in eager expectation of his opening words. They were, "God alone is great, my brethren;" simple words, an obvious and commonplace truth, but it demanded a high order of courage to speak them, then and there. The speaker who does not fear shall stand before kings. Having command of himself, his own fears, prejudices, ambitions, he may command others, and bow their hearts as the wind bends the forest trees.

It is not necessary, however, often to show one's courage by an attack on individuals. While we commend the courage of Bourdaloue in the instance mentioned above, it is a question whether he did not violate good taste in publicly reproving the King. He might have drawn a picture of the sin of adultery so clearly that the application would have been evident, and have reserved his personal rebuke for the royal closet. There may have been, however, exceptional reasons in that case for his very unusual per-

sonality. But it is evident that in any ordinary pulpit such direct references to a person in the audience or elsewhere are uncalled for and unwise. So far from exemplifying the preacher's courage, they merely exhibit his reckless unfairness; for he attacks men where they are not allowed to answer him or justify themselves. If he wishes to reprove, personally, a liquor-dealer, or quack-doctor, or Wall street speculator, or crafty railroad manipulator, he may show equal courage and greater wisdom by a quiet remonstrance in private than by, however fierce, a public assault. Such assaults do little good, but, rather harm. An ignorant and excitable constituency may cheer them, but rather from envy of prosperous men than from a just abhorrence of their sins. The preacher properly deals with classes, not with individuals. His admonitions should be directed to all, not to any one man, exclusive of the rest. Let him so speak as condemning sin, describing the various kinds of sins clearly, condemning the subterfuges of conscience by which it would avoid the divine law; and the personal application may safely be left to the hearer. It will be all the sharper if he makes it himself.

Another moral quality of highest importance flows from a sincere faith, and that is perseverance. If it were the cause of man he advocates, he might well be discouraged, should there be few apparent results. If it is God's cause he pleads, he may be confident that God will attend to his own work, and

prosper the seed that has been prayerfully sown. In one sense the preacher should look for immediate results. That is, he ought greatly to desire them, and do his utmost to secure them. It is a good plan occasionally to invite all who may be willing to begin the Christian life to give a public indication of it in some way, or to appoint an inquiry meeting which they are urged to attend. But, having done so, the preacher, if a man of faith, will not fall into a pet or be disheartened if no inquirers appear. One sermon does very little apparent good as a general rule, but a hundred sermons will accomplish something, and each one did its share.

A sermon should be one movement in a great campaign. It is part of a long series of moral impressions which the pastor is seeking to make upon the community, and he can afford to wait for the finished results. Nothing more illustrates the divine origin of Christ's teaching than the calmness with which he utters the truth and then leaves it to make its own impression. It is the heavenly seed scattered through the world. Some will, it is true, be devoured of fowls, some choked by thorns or withered on the stony ground, but the balance is sure to bring forth its appointed harvest. He did not ask all that were impressed to "stand up" immediately, or come forward to an anxious seat. He rather repressed the outward manifestations of zeal, and bade those who were helped by him to "tell no man."

It is related in the life of a very successful pastor, that upon entering a new parish he, from the first day, "preached for a revival." He did not expect it from the first sermon, or score of sermons. He knew that a man must sow before he can reap. But he persevered until in one or two years the revival came.

That preacher will exert a benign influence who, like Moses descending from Sinai, has manifestly come to the people from the serene heights of communion with God. The spiritual preparation is of greater consequence than the intellectual one. Prayer is the secret re-enforcement of the preacher's faith, which God will recompense with an open reward. Having talked face to face with God, he will not be much disconcerted in talking with men. And not only does secret prayer create a calm and holy confidence in his own mind, it puts a winsome quality into his manner, and a sweetness into his words, which gives them entrance to the popular heart.

It is a not unfrequent experience with a minister in actual service that he must enter upon the sacred work of the Sabbath suffering from depression, caused by anxieties and cares of various kinds. There are financial difficulties in the church, or opposition to him has begun to appear, and harsh criticisms have been reported from some of his principal supporters, or there has been sickness and death in the parish, making a severe drain upon his sympathies. What to do under these discouragements? Trust God, and

do his duty as best he can, saying nothing publicly of his private griefs. Preach the Gospel with all the more fervor, knowing that he is the servant of God, rather than of men. They called the master Beelzebub; it is of little consequence what they call the disciples. And his God shall make him to stand under whatever discouragements and reverses.

There is, at times, a kind of atmospheric influence abroad among the congregation, of material assistance to extempore preaching; so much so that nearly all ministers attempt it then, though they may never have done so before. We mean, of course, the atmosphere of a revival. The Holy Ghost has descended upon the city, because the Lord Jesus has much people there, and the time of their ingathering has come. The churches are, all at once, filled to overflowing; the week-day services are well attended. Abundant and heartfelt prayer ascends from every private oratory, from every family altar, from every thronged prayer-meeting. The people are aroused, attentive, sympathetic. They desire the plainest truth, stated in the most unadorned fashion. The mercy of God in Christ, the way of repentance, the path to the cross, the new life of faith and hope, is what they wish to hear of. These are topics near to the heart of every zealous pastor, and he is forward to speak of them, earnestly and fully. No one thinks at such a time of the intellectual caliber of the discourses, their learned allusions and brilliant metaphors. The points demanding attention are far

profounder, and take hold on eternal life. Under these circumstances any minister preaches fluently. No longer conscious of self, in its vanities and deficiencies, his object is to bring souls to Christ by the nearest and straightest road. Burning words, carrying conviction, flow unpremeditated from his earnest lips. It is the tongue of fire, lighting and warming the sanctuary. Such days are sacred, marked white in the preacher's remembrance.

Says President Humphrey in a letter to his son, speaking of a revival, "You cannot expect much time to write, it is true; nor will it be necessary. It will astonish you to find with what freedom you can speak on almost any subject at the shortest notice. Thoughts and words will come to you as they never did before." . . .

But such occasions must be, in the very nature of the case, exceptional. Men will not remain long in an aroused and excited condition, no matter how genuine the work of grace may be. After the freshet the stream returns to its ordinary channel. The revival is gone and the plodding, difficult work remains of gathering up and securing the fruits. Then comes the trial of the preacher's faith and zeal. Can he speak for God as boldly and plainly, on a quiet Sunday evening in June, as he did during the glorious meetings that followed the week of prayer? Is it possible to preserve a trained and veteran fervor the year through and always be eager to gather souls into the Kingdom? Then the power of glowing

speech that marked his discourses during the revival may continue with him the year around.

But, if a minister cannot always be at his best, he can always speak earnestly to the people, in grave and serious words that shall be for edification; and however deficient in preparation, or in facility of expression the discourse may be, he has no need to apologize for it, seeing he has done his best. Indeed, of all poor methods that have been invented for introducing a sermon, in our opinion, an apology is the worst. It is an obtrusion of self, when quite other considerations should be prominent. What difference does it make to the audience, if the speaker has a cold, or has been sick, or too busy to study, or away from his books? If really unprepared he would better decline to speak. At least, he could read an old sermon.

But an apology usually means that the speaker has not been able to prepare so fine an oration as he could wish, and the motive of it is easily seen to be vanity. Suppose he has had no especial time or strength for arranging that particular discourse; still, he is the servant of the Lord, doing his Master's work; he has the preparation of all his previous years of study, and the skill acquired in speaking a thousand times. If he cannot now rise and address an audience of his fellow-sinners for half an hour, in a manner suitable to their improvement, there must have been some grave defect, either in his training, or in his conception of what a sermon should be.

Besides, an apology calls attention beforehand to the anticipated poverty of the address. All the critical people are put upon the alert, to see how poor it will be. They are forewarned to expect a failure, and will naturally pride themselves on finding it. If nothing in derogation had been said by the preacher, they might have gone home thinking it one of his best sermons; and it may easily turn out to be better than he had expected. The great bulk of the congregation, who come, not to be amused, or to glorify the minister, but to be edified and strengthened by a solemn service, will for the most part think nothing about the intellectual quality of the sermon, unless it is suggested to them by the preacher himself. They will be occupied by the serious and important thoughts, or moved by his ardor for their salvation. An apology, therefore, is worse than useless, for it calls attention to defects that otherwise might escape unnoticed.

When speaking of the voice, we mentioned the value of sympathetic emotion, in imparting to it a tender and persuasive quality. The effect of sympathy is not seen in the voice alone, but in the choice of arguments and the whole tone of the sermon. Sympathy is a fellow-feeling for the joys and sorrows of men. It enables the preacher to put himself in their place for the time, and feel as they do It gives a knowledge of human nature, invaluable to one who wishes to mold the passions and characters of his audience. It is said of Jesus that "he knew what was in man." This gave him power to anticipate

their thoughts and adapt his teaching to their inmost needs. While we cannot hope to know men perfectly, as he did, we may cultivate, to an indefinite degree, a perception of their emotions, partly by a habit of observation, partly by looking into our own heart. Human hearts answer to each other as faces are reflected from a mirror. The same hopes, fears, temptations, ambitions, are in all, but combined in different degrees. A sympathetic preacher seems to his hearers to be giving eloquent expression to their own ideas. They go away saying: it was just what they had always thought. They are interested and excited because he appears to say exactly what they would have said in his place. He holds up the mirror before each man, and all recognize their portrait. The secret of it is, that he has first looked into his own heart and described what he saw there.

Sympathy with the people, if genuine, will give to the preacher, what many ministers sorely need, namely, tact. By this quality men are able to deal with each other and accomplish their ends without friction or irritation. It is a great advantage in all relations of life, but especially to a clergyman. So many sore and sensitive hearts are in his keeping, needing the consolations of the gospel; so many wayward and impetuous youth, that may be won by kindness and are sure to be repelled by harshness; so many conflicting interests in the church to be reconciled, until the most contradictory people are brought to live together as one happy family; people grasping and avaricious that are to be gently

persuaded to part with their dearly-loved wealth; the terrors of the law to be faithfully declared, without driving the sinner to indifference or despair: responsibilities such as these tempt him to cry "Who is sufficient for these things?" But tact can accomplish it, and does, every day. Tact is the outward expression of the love and sympathy with which his soul is filled. He is sensitive of hurting their feelings unnecessarily. He knows what things are likely to hurt, for his own nerves are sensitive and he can appreciate the suffering of others. Some men are like a rhinoceros, tough of hide, heavy of foot, and with a strong horn for stirring up things. They go through life trampling on tender and suffering hearts. If there is any possible way of creating trouble, they are sure to fall upon it. Pachydermatous themselves, they cannot realize the sensitiveness of others. It is terrible to see such men in the pastorate. They alienate more souls than they win. But the delicate tact, of such a man as Dr. Nettleton, for example, attracts thousands into the kingdom; and the memory of it lingers, like a delicate perfume, for a score of years.

Thus, the necessary spiritual condition of success is seen to be a faith that first of all unites the speaker's soul to God in a living and vital bond. Faith bestows courage, perseverance, and sympathetic tact in dealing with others, and renders the man of God fit for all good works. The constant prayer of all earnest ministers should be, "Lord, increase our faith."

XII.

REPEATING.

It is sometimes adduced, as an objection to this method of preaching, that the labor expended on a sermon is lost, after it is once delivered, and that it is as much work to recall and repeat a discourse the second time, as was required for the first. Such has not been the writer's experience. A sermon once well wrought out becomes, on the contrary, a possession for life. If it be on a solid subject that will bear to be preached on again and again; if the argument be developed with care, the scriptural proofs are adequate, and the illustrations significant; it is as easy to preach it again after twenty years, as it was the first week. The substantial thought, in all its ramifications, is indicated on the brief, and a simple re-reading of the latter brings it all back to the mind. The only new thing to be supplied is the language, which is all the better for being fresh, and after so many years of practice comes without conscious effort. It is necessary, however, that the mind should be in an active and fertile condition, and the studies kept up continuously, or the old brief will seem to be but a collection of dry bones. There is no place for indolence or sluggishness in ex-

tempore preaching, either at the beginning or afterwards.

It is, however, seldom found to be advisable to preach a sermon exactly as before. In all probability, if the speaker is a student, he has learned something in twenty years. His views of truth are modified. His knowledge of men and affairs is ampler. The old sermon, as it is, will no longer content him. But it is easy to alter and correct the brief, so as to bring the discourse up to his present standard. Some heads will be changed, some thrown out and others substituted. Generally it will be found that the divisions have expanded so that fewer are required. Above all, it will be wise to change the illustrations, so many at least as were pertinent to passing events, as the best ones are apt to be.

A sermon preached, for example, during the war naturally contained several references to the army, allusions to recent victories or defeats, to the state of the campaign, or to the feelings of those in the congregation whose friends were at the front. Ten or twenty years later these illustrations were no longer apposite. They would then be heard with impatience as belonging to something entirely gone by. But with a little pains they can all be changed for something more recent. The same great principles are as well illustrated by what happens to-day as by what occurred a score of years ago, and it is easy to make the substitution. The sermon will thus gain

immensely in interest and in applicability to the needs of the people.

In fact, here is one advantage of the unwritten above the written sermon. Changes can be made in it more easily. A written discourse a few years old is pervaded by the tone of feeling prevalent when it was composed. Every paragraph is redolent of the state of the church, or the condition of business, whether hopeful or depressed, or of the preacher's own feelings, if it was a timely discourse, and not a mere abstract discussion. Now this pervading tone can be altered with some pains, but it is more labor than it would be to make equal changes in an unwritten sermon. A day spent on the latter, or even an hour, if haste is necessary, will so alter its form, while preserving the substance, that nobody will imagine he had ever heard it before. Indeed, nobody has heard it, for it is essentially a new sermon, although the skeleton is old; like an old house reconstructed and repainted until the neighbors hardly recognize it for the same.

The objection may be raised here that such recasting of sermons involves so much labor that it might be as well to create new ones instead. But, as it seems to us, the labor is far more economically bestowed in the former case than in the latter. There may be as much labor involved; there should be as much labor as the preacher has time and strength to give. But if expended on a discourse that has been preached once or twice before, the same amount of

work will produce far more finished and satisfactory results. The mind works more easily in accustomed grooves. A sermon, once delivered and laid aside, becomes, as it were, something objective to the author of it. It is a veritable substance thrown off and for the time forgotten. When taken up for criticism some years later the preacher can regard it with somewhat of the impartiality of a stranger. He can perceive how it would strike an audience better than he possibly could while it was warm from the first forging. The whole can now be re-studied and made more accurate, broad, and complete in every way. With the same amount of effort required in the production of a new sermon, the old one can be made into a much better sermon than the new one would be.

Our advice is to recast the best sermons as often as once in seven or eight years, not intermitting the production of new ones meanwhile, but making unremitted efforts to have the old ones as perfect as possible. Every time the sermon is recast in this way it becomes more an integral expression of the idea, simple and strong in outline, perspicuous in its language, telling in its illustrations. It is thus easier for the minister to preach and pleasanter for the people to hear.

It may be that the changes made are merely formal ones, expressing more perfectly the same thoughts as before. But it is quite as likely that the alterations will be essential ones in the very structure

and bearing of the discourse. In either case the sermon will be improved by revision after an interval of time has elapsed since it was first made.

It is stated in the life of a famous American clergyman of the last generation that he had written about six thousand sermons during a ministry of sixty years. With all respect to such a venerable example, it seems that the labor would have been more economically laid out in rewriting each of one thousand sermons six times over. Granting that he wished to do so much work, a sermon six times recast is likely to be better than a sermon written but once. Probably, however, in this case the sermons, although from a new text, were the same old thoughts in a new dress, for no man has ideas enough to fill out six thousand absolutely distinct sermons.

It is important, therefore, to preserve carefully an outline of every sermon that a minister has preached for future revision and repetition. It is wise also to preserve a brief even of prayer-meeting addresses, funeral remarks, and talks to children. The intellect is not always creative of new thought. Good material should never be thrown away. Once produced it should be kept for a life-time. It is the only way in which the preacher can accumulate capital which will allow time for doing other kinds of work in after years, by rendering easier the ordinary duties of his profession.

A frequent examination of the packages of briefs, whether of sermons or prayer-meeting talks, taken by yearly periods, will serve a useful purpose by

showing the preacher what has been the general course of his sermonizing. Has he accorded a due proportion of time to the great themes of the faith, or has he wandered into subordinate and less important discussions? Has he preached much about Christ? Has he often sought directly for the conversion of men? Have the divine attributes been held up, that men might fear and love the living God? Such questions as these often and anxiously asked by every zealous minister, are easily answered by looking over the little bundle of sermon briefs pertaining to the year. They show in a moment what he has been doing, and enable him to supply deficiencies, that the entire substance of his teaching may become more symmetrical with the solid substance of the Gospel. In the idiosyncracies of any mind, there is danger of undue emphasis upon certain parts of the divine message to the harmful neglect of the rest. This tendency may be corrected by a frequent review of the topics that have been preached upon, forcibly reminding the preacher of what may be in excess.

It is not, however, to be hastily concluded that a minister fails of his duty because certain aspects of the truth recur to him frequently, and are more willingly preached upon, than others. He may have been divinely appointed to that very end, that some neglected truth may be rescued from oblivion and forced anew upon the attention of a reluctant generation. If any one is curious in the matter, he can easily satisfy himself by an examination of their

published sermons, that the great preachers have preferred to work over incessantly a few leading ideas, rather than to search for novel ones. At least, it is quite characteristic of them to do so. Their originality consisted in stating and fully applying two or three great principles, or sometimes a single one. Their power was immensely increased by the ease and effectiveness with which they handled themes, that set their own souls on fire, and which they had spoken of many times before. With one it was the sovereignty of God, with another justification by faith; the divine sympathy shown through Christ, "the soul of goodness in things evil," the reformatory power of the gospel on human society, have each been leading ideas with great and powerful preachers. Some owe their startling energy to the direct appeal, never omitted, for immediate repentance and conversion. Others have almost always fallen into the tone of tender and pathetic emotion. Others deal in practical applications of the gospel to works of charity or social conduct. Probably this constant repetition of a few great thoughts was the necessity of their mental action. The thoughts had been so impressed upon their own spiritual experience, that they seemed to be the chief part of the gospel.

The young preacher need not be afraid, then, of the charge that he is repeating himself. Repeat himself, he certainly will, in any event; for no mind can pour forth absolutely new matter for a term of years. But there is less objection to the repeti-

tion, if what he repeats is intrinsically important, one of the great and significant principles of the faith.

But the most famous preachers have not only repeated constantly a few great thoughts. Many of them were not ashamed to repeat precisely the same sermon. So much was this the case with the French preachers, that it gave occasion to an oft-quoted saying of Louis XIV, that "he would rather hear the repetitions of Bourdaloue than the novelties of other men." This was well known to be the habit of Whitefield; "Foote and Garrick maintained that his oratory was not at its full height, until he had repeated a discourse forty times." Franklin said of the same great orator, "By hearing him often, I came to distinguish easily between sermons newly composed, and those he had preached often in the course of his travels. His delivery of the latter was so improved by frequent repetition, that every accent, every emphasis, every modulation of voice was so perfectly tuned, that one could not help being pleased with the discourse." Says Dr. Southey, it was a great advantage that he could alter the sermons with each new delivery; "those parts were omitted which had been felt to come feebly from the tongue, and fall heavily on the ear; and their place was supplied by matter newly laid in, in the course of his studies, or fresh from the feeling of the moment. The salient points of his oratory were not prepared passages—they were bursts of passion, like jets of a geyser, when the spring is in full play."

These passages taken from Philip's life of Whitefield prove sufficiently his habit of repeating favorite sermons. He could do this more easily, as he was constantly meeting new audiences on his travels; an advantage which a settled pastor does not have. But they prove also that Whitefield was not content with a parrot-like repetition. Although the sermon had been written at first, it was constantly changed on delivery, to suit the changed conditions of the audience, or the altered mood of the speaker. He was entirely independent of the manuscript, and although his preparations had been as elaborate as possible, he spoke at last, under the impulse of the moment.

One of Dr. Chalmer's admirers humorously reports that on a certain occasion he was edified by hearing a sermon, which the doctor had preached several times before. Dr. Dewey, in his recently-published autobiography, says that he had preached all of his sermons five times over before leaving New Bedford, and had "preached them to death" during his pastorate in New York. Perhaps this was one secret of the wonderful charm said to have been found in his preaching.

Probably in all these cases, while the sermon was repeated, in its essential features, there had been introduced many modifications, to match the new occasion. The illustrations might be varied, or the application changed. What was before a topic of consolation, might now become a source of admonition;

or if previously applied to individuals, it might take a broader outlook, contemplating the church or the nation.

It serves a useful purpose, also, to vary the mode of preparation, in a sermon which is to be repeated. For example, if it was written before, it may be recast as an extemporaneous sermon, or an extemporaneous sermon may be afterwards written out carefully. Each of these methods involves very considerable changes in the sermon. It will probably be improved by the revision, in either case. Working over the thought from a new point of view, or with new materials, or with additional labor, clarifies it, and increases its vigor.

Recasting sermons in this way conduces, moreover, to one quality of style peculiarly important to a speaker, namely, to perspicuity. Having recast the same discourse four or five times, which will necessitate the going over it in his thoughts, at least twenty times, at long intervals, the whole subject has grown to be lucid and definite to the mind. The preacher knows exactly what he would say. He has said it to himself a score of times, in a variety of expressions. He now sees clearly the end from the beginning, and the interdependence of every part. His sentences will take, finally, an almost proverbial form from much attrition. His style will become pellucid as a mountain brook, through which his ideas show like rounded pebbles on the bottom.